



# JEEVADHARA

## **A CRISIS-RIDDEN WORLD: BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES**

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**Edited by**  
**Rekha M. Chennattu**

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## **A Crisis-Ridden World: Biblical Perspectives**

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## Editorial

This issue of *Jeevadhara* has as its theme – A Crisis-Ridden World: Biblical Perspectives. The whole world finds itself in the grip of terrorism, insurgencies and various types of conflicts. The cumulative effect of these phenomena is extremely frightening and invites special attention from all of us. On the one hand, there are such happenings as growing atheism, global economic crisis, violence in the name of religion, fundamentalism, secularization and globalization, and on the other hand, there is an ever growing hunger for God and search for meaning in life. Does the Bible have something to say to a world facing unprecedented crises and paradoxes? It is in this context that we explore the biblical responses to these paradoxes. The present issue has selected five important contemporary challenges for consideration – global financial crisis, terrorism and violence, religious fundamentalism, subaltern groups, and global migration and cultural conflicts – and has given a biblical response to each of them.

Today the economic crisis has become a global financial meltdown which affects the livelihoods of almost everyone as we live in an increasingly interconnected world. Jacob Prasad explores the biblical motif of the Jubilee Year as the biblical solution for economic crisis. After examining both the basic orientations of the biblical jubilee prescriptions as well as the modern economic theories and practices, the author arrives at the conclusion that the biblical concept of Jubilee Year can be a point of departure in decoding the right orientations for a more fair and just economic order in the present scenario of the global financial crisis.

The menace of terrorism has become more alarming than the full-scale war, and ordinary people are its biggest victims. More shocking is the fact that religions do play a significant role in perpetuating the spiral of violence in our contemporary society. Boris Repschinski examines the various trajectories of violence in the second temple Judaism and in the New Testament. One can find in the Bible both violent and non-violent actions even on the part of God on behalf of Israel, the chosen people of God. Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God, characterized by love, peace and harmony, overthrows the violent imagery from within, inviting all of us to participate actively in the building up of a more just and peaceful human community.

Religious fundamentalism manifests itself in various ways. It is a strategy by which some religious groups attempt to preserve their distinctive religious identity by picking and choosing carefully some doctrines, beliefs

and practices from the past that are sensational and appealing and acceptable to the audience. Fundamentalist groups are on the increase in the world. M.I. Raj explores the reality of fundamentalism from its origin in the historical context of an American Protestant movement to its development until today as a global phenomenon with all its complexity. The author then examines how the Bible addresses this multifaceted phenomenon and suggests that, using its rich traditions of Prophets and Wisdom that are personified in Jesus, the Bible makes positive contributions to address the issue of fundamentalism constructively and meaningfully.

Emancipation and empowerment of vulnerable groups are the order of the day. Dalits and tribals are the most disadvantaged groups in India. Thomas Karimundackal looks at the *agonia* (struggle) of Jesus on the Mount of Olives in Luke 22:39-46 from a subaltern perspective. After a close and detailed comparative study of the Lucan text with that of Mark and Matthew, Karimundackal concludes that Luke presents Jesus victorious in his combat against the powers of darkness or forces of evil. The author compares the struggle of Jesus with that of the Dalit community in India and presents Jesus' "struggle-victory" experience in the garden as a paradigm of hope for subaltern communities. All human beings are born free as children of God and are equal in dignity and rights. It is a biblical imperative to uplift the subaltern groups and liberate them from the clutches of traditional bondages.

Andreas Vonach draws our attention to the problems related to the cultural diversity and conflicts created by the presence of aliens or the so-called migrants all over the world. As the migrants stand in between their own culture and that of the land where they live, they do not fully belong to any culture. There seems to be some vagueness and uncertainties in the process of upholding one's own culture as well as integrating the new culture in which they find themselves. The author explores the "alien- laws" in the Law Codes of the Books of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy and presents them as models for responding to the challenges of contemporary society characterized by multi-faceted phenomena such as ethnic diversity and cultural pluralism.

I do hope that this issue will in some way inspire the readers to examine these issues more critically and stimulate them to work for the creation of a safe and secure world that is less violent and more just and humane.

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# Biblical Perspectives on a Fair and Just Economic Order

Jacob Prasad

Jacob Prasad is professor of biblical studies at the Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Alwaye. He holds a licentiate in Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome, and a doctorate in biblical theology from the Gregorian University, Rome.

The present day neo-liberal market economy has witnessed rapid growth on different sectors of life globally. Yet it has not been a balanced, inclusive and sustainable growth. The global financial crisis, that started showing itself in 2008, still looms large. The Bible, although not a textbook on economics, still provides some criteria for a fair and just economic world order. The concept of Jubilee in the Book of Leviticus in the Old Testament, which has its reverberations in the ministry of Jesus too, appears to be a point of departure in decoding the right orientations. The principles of equality, solidarity and accepting the dignity of the weakest, envisaged in the jubilee year prescriptions would go with the Keynesian principles of economics, which have proved to be right in history, although in themselves they will require adaptation and actualisation in today's context. Jubilee holds out the ideal of an egalitarian society; even as it upholds the right of having private holdings, it does not promote private property that would help the rich to be disproportionately rich, displacing and impoverishing the poor, nor does it encourage speculative buying and selling that feeds inflation. Neither does the manifesto promote a social or common ownership of the land.

Economics, meaning the management of the resources of the household (*oikos*), deals with the daily lives of people, about procuring food, shelter and clothes and seeking work. Therefore as a science it is involved in explaining the laws connected with value, money, utility, labour, employment, interest and profit. In national affairs, economics deals with gross national product, the balance of payments, national debt, foreign exchange market, etc.<sup>1</sup> The biblical religions – Jewish and Christian – as they deal with the affairs of men and women of the earthly city, do provide theological and moral resources for a sound economic life. This ethic is based upon a faith vision of God as the

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1 George PALACKAPPILLY, "Economic Ethic: Biblical Resources," in *Theology for Our Times* (Indian School of Ecumenical Theology Commemorative Issue; Bangalore, 1999) 92-102, here 92.

Creator and Possessor of all creation. This relationship of all persons and things to the God is central to every conclusion entailed by a biblical approach to economic life. Moreover, the Hebrew religion was community-centred religion, that is, every person was essentially a part of the community within which he or she lived in relationship with God and the others. Thus when the Bible insists on justice to the poor, orphan and the widow, it is not merely a duty imposed by God or the nation. It is a natural outgrowth of the fact that each Israelite person is intimately linked to the other members of the people of God. The New Testament extends the insights of the Hebrew Scriptures into economic life and introduces a new element in its approach to wealth and property. Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God, as already at hand and still coming. He pointed out the dangers of wealth. In one of his parables Jesus ridiculed the rich man who had upon getting a bountiful harvest extended his barns and stored up the grain and told himself, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink and be merry" (Luke 12,19). That the early Christians took to heart the teachings of Jesus is clear from the Acts of the Apostles which speaks of a brief enthusiasm among the Christians in holding "all things in common" (Act 2,44; 4,32-35). However there was no general movement in the churches towards such a sharing of goods, no common Christian economic programme to organize production on any systematic manner.<sup>2</sup>

One of the characteristic features of the economy in our days is undoubtedly its globalisation. Globalisation according to the European Commission "is the process by which markets and production in different countries are becoming increasingly interdependent due to the dynamics of trade in goods and services and flow of capital and technology."<sup>3</sup> Interdependence has always been one of the constants of the economic world. But while in the past interdependence was limited in geographical extent and in quantity, today it embraces virtually the whole world and conditions all aspects of the economy.

Globalisation, together with the large scale privatisation of the economy, has accelerated the process of competition between the different levels of productivity. An attempt by economies with lower productivity to catch up has become difficult. The economies of the Third World and the former "real socialist" societies seem to have no chance of attaining the level of productivity of the world market. Each

2 PALACKAPPILLY, "Economic Ethic," 96.

3 As cited in *The Statement of the Indian Theological Association: Indian Theology of Economics in a Globalized World* (ed. Jacob PARAPPALLY – Antony KALLIATH) (Pune: 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting, April 25-29, 2009) no. 6.



new round of the competitive process means an annihilation of capital on a large scale, and with it also an annihilation of capacity to pay and purchasing power.<sup>4</sup> Hence even as globalisation brings the whole world together, its other side is the stark reality of large numbers of people suffering from a lack of that which supports the family of humankind: food, shelter, clothing and especially money. The poor have become further marginalised and they are also made to feel that they are dispensable.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, the year 2008 saw a massive economic meltdown affecting the whole world. According to some economic experts this meltdown originated in the United States of America. The crash of stock markets and large financial institutions, the phenomenon of banks becoming bankrupt as well as the massive job losses due to recession are some of the more visible signs of this meltdown. The causes would seem to lie in wasteful and irresponsible expenditure, in loaning money that was unrecoverable, in making serious miscalculations and ruinous investments.<sup>6</sup> The credit crunch that has gripped the world's financial systems since then has affected everybody, and we know that there were serious structural flaws in the banking system.<sup>7</sup>

At this juncture Biblical theology cannot remain cynically seated in the square on the pretext that no one has summoned it to the task of responding to this situation. Because, "the lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3,8). The Scriptures, however, do not provide a blueprint by which we can construct a Christian economy. Nor is the Bible an economic or political treatise. However the Bible provides some criteria by which we can judge the integrity of economic priorities and systems. It is possible that these criteria may point to the establishment of a fair and just economic order in the world.<sup>8</sup>

4 Bruno KERN, "A Colossus with Clay Feet. Is the World Economy about to Collapse?" *Concilium* (1997/2) 11-18, here 16.

5 *The Statement of the Indian Theological Association*, nos. 7-8. As Jorge HEINE – Ramesh THAKUR, "The Dark Side of Globalisation," *The Hindu Daily* (Kochi edition, January 10, 2011) 10, observe, "Globalisation is not uncontrolled. The movement of people remains tightly restricted. The flow of capital is highly asymmetrical. Over the last two decades, overseas development assistance from the rich to the poor countries has totaled \$ 50-80 billion per year. In the same period, every year, \$ 500-800 billion of illegal funds have been sent from poor to rich countries. That is, for every one dollar of aid money over the table, the West gets back \$ 10 under the table and, for good measure, lectures the rest on corruption."

6 *The Statement of the Indian Theological Association*, no. 3.

7 Christopher JAMISON, "Soul Purpose of Banking," *Tablet* (7 August 2010) 10-11, here 10.

8 Sarojini HENRY, "A Fair and Just Economic Order in the World: Biblical Vision," in *Theology for Our Times* (Indian School of Ecumenical Theology Commemorative Issue; Bangalore, 1999) 103-112, here 105.

## 1. Jubilee, the Biblical Solution for Economic Injustice

The Biblical thrust on matters of economics can be traced, as we hinted at above, to the early Jewish Scriptures. In the Torah we find instances of regulations and limitations in the buying and selling of goods, cultivation of land, fair competition in trade practices and raising of livestock. The economic order including the perspectives on private property, wealth and poverty, honesty in business transactions is extensively addressed in the Torah. Everything was placed within the covenant relationship, "See, I have set before you life and prosperity, death and adversity" (Deut 30,15).

Indeed the function of prophets was precisely on matters of economics; they would insist that there is no heaven without the earth. The prophets constantly refer to unjust structures in Israelite society that needed rectification. As Abraham Heschel puts it, "The prophetic field of concern is not on the mysteries of heaven, but on the affairs of the market place, ... on the lives of the people, not the glories of eternity, but the blights of society."<sup>9</sup>

The biblical economic vision according to the Jewish Scriptures is *Yobel*, the Jubilee Year. The Jubilee year and the Sabbatical year were divine commands, geared towards the eventual lifting of the burdens of the impoverished, and the levelling of the wide economic differences then current in Israelite society. Every fifty years the land and debts were all to be released and returned to the original owners so that a fresh start could be made for those who had lost their land for some reason or other. In addition, every seventh year was to be sabbatical year in which all debts were forgiven, all slaves freed and the land allowed to lie fallow. Such a system, it was believed, could not cripple the wealthy, and the poor never got so poor that they could break out of the vicious circle of poverty.<sup>10</sup>

In Jesus, the Jubilee year, the seventh Sabbath, is accomplished in its fullest sense. In the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached the conditions of the Jubilee would prevail, for he envisaged a transformation and fulfilment of life on earth, when all creatures would respond to God's purposes, an ideal state to be achieved at the end and yet already present on earth. Economic matters, therefore, became part of this multidimensional vision of the Kingdom of God, which is both this-worldly and future oriented.<sup>11</sup> Jesus was confident that he came so

9 Abraham Joshua HESCHEL, *The Prophets* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1962) 364, as cited by HENRY, "A Fair and Just Economic Order," 104.

10 HENRY, "A Fair and Just Economic Order," 105.

11 HENRY, "A Fair and Just Economic Order," 105.



that people may have life and have it abundantly (John 10,10). In his thinking, the material well-being of people was of no less value than spiritual wholeness. He taught, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Since in Jesus' own mission the conditions of Jubilee year would prevail; it is good to zero in on the Jubilee prescriptions in Leviticus 25, for that would serve as a point of departure in searching for criteria for guiding the present-day economic realm, especially against the background of globalisation and privatisation and the global financial crisis.

In Leviticus 25, after the "Introduction" (1,1-2a), the text speaks of the Sabbatical Year (2b-7) and the Year of Jubilee (8-55). Since both these sections after the introduction have the same theme, the *restitutio in integrum* or the restoration to an original state<sup>12</sup>, the reason for juxtaposing the two is obvious.

### 1.1 The Sabbatical Year (Lev 25,2b-7)

Exod 23,10-11 and Deut 15,1-3 prescribe the holding of every seventh year as the sabbatical year. While Exod 23,10-11 goes with the text in Lev 25,2b-7 dealing with the "release of the land", i.e., the crops of the land should not be harvested during that year, that of Deut 15,1-3 deals with the "release of monetary claims." The two ought to be considered complementary, for no debtor could be expected to repay his loans while prohibited from tilling or reaping the land.<sup>13</sup> It is worth noting that the text in Lev 25,2b-7 makes use of the term "sabbatical year", while on the other occasions mention only the "seventh year."<sup>14</sup> The reason for leaving the land fallow is different for Exod 23,10-11 and for Leviticus 25,2b-7. The former gives a "social reason" for leaving the land uncultivated and unharvested that the growth of that year may be at the disposal of the "poor" who have no stake in the soil, and of the "wild beasts" that they are not restricted to what people give them or leave over from their crops. However the reason in Lev 25,6-7 is sacral, a "time of rest" or a "Sabbath for Yahweh". It rests on the understanding that Yahweh is the true owner of the land and that the directness of this relationship ought to be restored every seventh year, without the land having its "rest" disturbed by men and women unto whose hands it has been passed.<sup>15</sup> In the sabbatical year there shall not be any farming activity like sowing, pruning or harvesting. All the members of the

<sup>12</sup>Martin NOTH, *Leviticus* (Old Testament Library; London: SCM Press, 1977) 183

<sup>13</sup> Jacob MILGROM, *Leviticus 23-27* (AB 3B; New York, NY: Doubleday, 2001) 2245.

<sup>14</sup> NOTH, *Leviticus*, 183.

<sup>15</sup> NOTH, *Leviticus*, 186.



household may eat from the produce of the land of that year but may not harvest the yield either to sell or to stockpile. The list of people in v. 6 shows that no one living in Israel is excluded from gathering of the produce of the sabbatical year for eating.<sup>16</sup> It means that the sabbatical year is one of solidarity and of fullness and joy for all.

## 1.2 The Jubilee Year (Lev 25,8-55)

This long pericope has three sections: the proclamation and explication of the nature of the jubilee year (25,8-22); the basic principle relating to the redemption of property (25,23-24); the three stages of destitution requiring redemption or special action on the part of an Israelite: sold land and houses and their redemption (25,25-34); a brother in difficulty requiring a loan (25,35-38); redemption of a brother fallen into servitude (25,39-55).

### 1.2.1 The Proclamation and Explication of the Nature of the Jubilee Year (Lev 25,8-22)

The first section (vv. 8-22) begins with the calendar (v. 8), the proclamation (vv. 9-10) and the explication (vv. 11-12) of the jubilee year, and it leads to the regulations about the leasing of the land (vv. 13-17), related paraenesis (vv. 18-19), and finally it assuages people's concerns (vv. 20-22).

Verse 10 speaks of "proclaiming release/liberty." The word used for "release/liberty" is *deror*, which has its Akkadian cognate *anduraru*. The proclamation of *anduraru* "release" was part of the larger edict of *misharum* (literally, a "straightening out"), the socio-economic reform enacted by Mesopotamian kings on their ascension to the throne or for emergencies. Today there is evidence that this was practised also by the territory of the Hittites, in Syria and even in the Ptolemaic Egypt. That such release was a living and efficacious instrument can be proved from the loan documents that we have from the beginning of the second millennium in these regions, in which it is stated that *anduraru* and *misharum* would have no effect on their loans. *Anduraru* and *misharum* proclaimed a remission of debts, a return of the immovable properties to the original owners and the manumission of debt-slaves. But it has to be noted from vv. 8-10 that in sharp contrast with all ancient West Asian *anduraru* and *misharum* proclamations, the biblical jubilee was cyclical – ordained by God and not by any earthly ruler according to one's whim or need – and could not be revoked or circumvented.<sup>17</sup> Verse 10b declares

<sup>16</sup> John E. HARTLEY, *Leviticus* (WBC 4; Dalls, TX: Word Books, 1992) 434.

<sup>17</sup> MILGROM, *Leviticus* 23-27, 2166-2169.

the kernel of the jubilee celebration: "you shall return, every one of you to your property, and every one of you to your family." The story of Naboth (1 Kgs 21) illustrates impressively the permanent inalienability of the inherited land. As the separation between "property" and "family" would happen due to indebtedness, a freeing from such burdens would be a pre-requisite for the "return" or restoration of the order of things as they originally existed.<sup>18</sup> The details of the freeing of burdens will be presented in the text as it progresses. In the explication of the jubilee year (vv. 11-12) the Sabbath-year regulations from vv. 4b and 5a are repeated, although in a somewhat shortened way. There is the prohibition of sowing and harvesting but the permission to eat from the land's produce. Some authors think that the use of the second person plural in the Hebrew text *lakem* (you) three times in vv. 10-12 implies that in contrast to the after-growth of the sabbatical year, which is available to the landowner and his relatives, used with the singular second person, *leka*, the after-growth of the jubilee is available to all Israelites, including the poor.<sup>19</sup>

With the leading theme of "the return to the property" (v. 13) what is dealt with is the buying or selling, practically the leasing, of land in relationship to the jubilee (vv. 13-17). Verse 14 prohibits the oppression of others in buying and selling land. One should not make use of the superior advantages, no exploitation of another's plight. The land cannot indeed be properly sold or bought because of the "liberation" that would happen in the jubilee year (vv. 15-16). Moreover, it was merely the sale or purchase of the yearly produce, and not exactly of the land itself, and the price was calculated in terms of the number of years to the next jubilee. Verse 15a speaks of the number of years since the jubilee; it was because that was the only fixed and conclusive way of computing the number of years to the next "liberation".<sup>20</sup> The paraenetic sentence in v. 17 repeats the prohibition of cheating, with the verb *tonu*. This injunction is found elsewhere in such places as Exod 22,20-23; Lev 19,33-34; Deut 23,16-17; Jer 22,3 and so on. It is probably designed to protect the underprivileged in society and "to deter any form of economic exploitation arising from the dichotomy of rich and poor."<sup>21</sup> The latter part of v. 17 entails an identification of God, the formula of Yahweh's self introduction, "for I am the Lord your God." The related paraenesis

18 NOTH, *Leviticus*, 187.

19 MILGROM, *Leviticus* 23-27, 2176.

20 NOTH, *Leviticus*, 187-188.

21 E. S. GERSTENBERGER, *Leviticus* (trans. D. W. Scott) (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996) 381, as cited in MILGROM, *Leviticus* 23-27, 2179.

which follows has the advice to do God's will, which is supported by the promise of dwelling securely in the land and of having abundance of food (vv. 18-19). Such a promise of abundance of food raises people's concern about having enough food for a sabbatical year and the year following (vv. 20-22). The reference to sowing in the eighth year (v.22) shows that the disputation was originally concerning the sabbatical year and not the year of jubilee unless the theory that the two years fall together is valid. By its context here the disputation applies primarily to the sabbatical year and by extension to the jubilee year. God's promise of special blessing on the sixth year is only relevant given the people's apprehension about the difficulties that such a celebration would ensue. In conclusion we may have to say that the first two major units of this chapter (vv. 2-7) and (vv. 8-22) are thus closely linked since the year of the jubilee is a high sabbatical year.<sup>22</sup> So abundant will be the produce of the sixth year that it would suffice for the seventh, as well as the eighth (re-planting) and ninth (new harvest) years.<sup>23</sup>

### 1.2.2 *The Principle Underlying the Redemption of Property* (Lev 25,23-24)

Lev 25,23-24, enunciate the basic principle for the redemption of property during the jubilee year. Verse 23 says that the land was in general and in principle Yahweh's property and hence men and women could not dispose of it as their private property. They are like foreigners and tenants, who could use the land, make use of its produce, but did not own it. Because of this reason they should provide for the redemption of the land throughout the land (v. 24). The divine owner declares that every piece of property held by the families of Israel as an inheritance given under the covenant carries a right of redemption. Therefore no legal loophole was to be found to circumvent the intention of this law.<sup>24</sup>

### 1.2.3 *The Three Stages of Destitution Needing Redemption or Special Action* (Lev 25,25-55)

Here each of the three sets of laws relating to sale, redemption and special action begins with the same phrase, *ki yamuk 'ahika*, "if your brother becomes poor/falls into difficulty"; hence situations of

22 HARTLEY, *Leviticus*, 424. Indeed the calendar of the jubilee year stated in Lev 25,10 is a *crux interpretum*. It is discussed as to whether the seventh sabbatical year (i.e. the 49<sup>th</sup> year) itself is the jubilee year or the year that followed, i.e., the fiftieth year. Without going into a detailed discussion, our own inference as seen here is that the seventh sabbatical year itself is the jubilee year. See Robert NORTH, *Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1954) 109-134. See also NOTH, *Leviticus*, 186-188.

23 Roland J. FALEY, "Leviticus," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (ed. R. E. Brown - J. A. Fitzmyer - R. E. Murphy) (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1991) 61-79, here 77.

24 HARTLEY, *Leviticus*, 438.



destitution. The directives here then become an integral part of the liberating power of the jubilee year. The primary reason for the incorporation of this legislation into the year of jubilee is that debt was the greatest internal threat to the social foundation of the equality of all Israelites, based on the enduring right of every family to its patrimony.<sup>25</sup>

#### 1.2.3.1 Sold Land and Houses and Their Redemption (Lev 25,25-34)

An impoverished Israelite who was forced to sell his land either in full or in part had three possibilities of getting it back (vv. 25-28): re-acquisition of the patrimony in the name of the poor person by a relative acting as *goel*, "redeemer"; re-acquisition by the poor person himself when later his situation turns better (with proportionate reduction from the original sale price); or reversion at the time of the jubilee.

Houses in "walled cities" did not have the right of perpetual redemption. They may be sold and bought (vv. 29-31). After such a house has been sold, it may be redeemed only within the span of one year. The buyer can keep it as long as required; the jubilee year has no effect on the ownership of such a house. This was probably because in walled cities the population was racially mixed and the populace did not live off the land.<sup>26</sup> But the house in a village is treated as a field and so carried the right of redemption; it may be leased but returned to its owner at jubilee.

In the special law relating to Levites (vv. 32-34) it is said that the houses in Levitical cities carry the perpetual right of redemption, as the Levites had no inheritance other than the gift of certain cities along with pasture land (Num 35,1-8; Josh 21). Pasture land was never to be sold, for it was a possession for all time. It was the place where the Levites would pasture their flocks. Since the Levites were engaged in the work of sanctuaries and in teaching the people they could not be burdened with farming and shepherding. Their houses were their primary possessions; so the laws of redemption did apply to their houses.<sup>27</sup>

#### 1.2.3.2 A Brother in Difficulty Requiring A Loan (Lev 25,35-38)

The section in vv. 35-38 would seem to have no direct connection either to the jubilee year or to the redemption laws. Probably the connection is effected by way of the first clause, "if a brother has become poor/has fallen into difficulty."<sup>28</sup> These laws prohibit taking interest on a loan given to a fellow Israelite faced with poverty. Whenever a brother

<sup>25</sup> HARTLEY, *Leviticus*, 424-425.

<sup>26</sup> HARTLEY, *Leviticus*, 439.

<sup>27</sup> HARTLEY, *Leviticus*, 439-440.

<sup>28</sup> NOTH, *Leviticus*, 191.

needed money the member of the community was to “support/strengthen” him, as he would do to a resident alien or a stranger. But to demand interest (*neshek*) on money or interest (*tarbit/ marbit*) on a loan of seed or food from a brother is forbidden. Interest was allowed in the case of a non-Israelite debtor (Deut 23,21). The command means that no Israelite is to profit from a brother’s need for financial assistance.<sup>29</sup>

### 1.2.3.3 Redemption of A Brother Fallen into Servitude (Lev 25,39-55)

Here at first the case is that of an Israelite having to sell himself (not just his property) to another Israelite due to debt (vv. 39-46). This would amount to making him a slave by the buyer. But the Israelite master was not to treat him thus, but in the manner of a “hired servant” or a “sojourner.” It means that his power to work was taken into account but his person was not in any way at the disposal of the other.<sup>30</sup> The reason adduced for it is that the person already belonged to Yahweh as his slave, so that no other person could regard him as his property. The Israelite slave would work for his Israelite master until the year of jubilee. Then, he and his children will be freed to go back to his clan and to his ancestral possession. Thus in every jubilee year all Israelites return to the status of free citizens.<sup>31</sup> Israelites are permitted to buy and own slaves, both male and female. But such slaves are to be from foreign peoples, from the descendants of the “sojourners” living among the Israelites. It is assumed that probably these people did not sell themselves as slaves but perhaps due to economic depression had to become slaves and offer their children for sale as slaves.<sup>32</sup> These could be held as real slaves, i.e., as one’s possession or property, so that they could be passed from father to son as family’s inheritance. Although the Israelite slave was to be set free in the jubilee year, it is to be noted here with regret that the path to travel before the institution of slavery is universally condemned will be very long.<sup>33</sup>

The second portion here (vv. 47-55) regulates the situation in which an Israelite who has become poor is necessitated to sell himself to a foreigner of some substance living in the midst of the people of Israel. In that case one of his kinsmen may redeem him; close relatives are obligated to act as next of kin for another member of that family. The victim himself may procure his own liberation. The price of such a

29 HARTLEY, *Leviticus*, 440. , 30 NOTH, *Leviticus*, 191.

31 HARTLEY, *Leviticus*, 441. 32 NOTH, *Leviticus*, 192.

33 HARTLEY, *Leviticus*, 441.

servant's redemption is to be determined on the basis of the wages of a hired worker according to the length of time until the next jubilee. If the manumission has not been effected in these ways, the debtor-slave goes out in the jubilee year. In a way the foreigner is obligated by the jubilee year regulations to set the Israelite slave and his children free. It would mean that ill-treatment of an Israelite slave, especially of not freeing him in the jubilee year, would take place in front of the Israelites, and would have a particularly damaging effect.<sup>34</sup>

## 2. The Basic Orientations of the Biblical Jubilee Prescriptions

It has been enquired as to whether the biblical jubilee was ever celebrated. The answer has not been easy. While some of the exegetes consider that the year of jubilee was a utopian ideal that was never designed for observance and consequently never observed, others are of the opinion that it has been celebrated. Whatever the answer be it is important to take note of the basic values and principles underpinning the jubilee proposals of the Old Testament. The goal of jubilee was at first to maintain the "solidarity" of the various clans in Israel by keeping alive the ideal of the "equality" of all Israelite citizens under the covenant. The greatest sign of solidarity was the assistance by way of redemption of the destitute brother by the next of kin. That would also assure a kind of equality among the Israelites in that everyone had his inheritance, as was apportioned initially by Joshua. Secondly, jubilee put limits on the rich from becoming disproportionately rich, i.e., it sought to prevent the rich from assuming property into large estates (cf. Isa 5,8) and reducing the poor to landless farmers. Thirdly, jubilee attempts at conserving the dignity of the poor; the poor are also stakeholders in the land; they too have a say on the land; the poor and the marginalised are not at all dispensable. Thus the jubilee principle attacked head-on the dehumanizing powers of debt and landlessness.<sup>35</sup>

The year of jubilee functions in later scriptures as typology for the ideal age when God would reign supreme over the entire globe. Three futuristic texts of the Old Testament employ terms and images from the jubilee describing the coming salvation. First, Isa 6,1-3 speaks of a coming prophet who will proclaim liberty, i.e., the year of jubilee. Second, the vision of Daniel in 9,24-27 sets the messianic age to begin in the year of the tenth jubilee. Third, in a vision of the ideal Israel, Ezekiel applies the laws on the right of redemption of property

34 NOTH, *Leviticus*, 193.

35 HARTLEY, *Leviticus*, 443.



specifically to the property of the prince who will lead the nation (46,16-18). The use of jubilee as a typology continues in Judaism, e.g., *The Book of Jubilees* (cf. 1,29) and 11Q Melchizedek.<sup>36</sup>

There are two uses of the jubilee as a typology in the interpretation of Jesus' ministry. The most important of these is the use of it in Luke 4,16-30, where Jesus presented the programme of his mission in terms of Isa 61,1-2. "The year of the Lord's favour" is to be understood in terms of the jubilee year. The second reference to jubilee in relationship to Jesus' ministry occurs in his reply to John the Baptist's enquiry as to whether he was truly the Messiah (Luke 7,20-23; Matt 11,2-6). Jesus cast his answer in the language of Isa 35,5-7 and 61,1, which are eschatological texts filled with the imagery of the year of jubilee.<sup>37</sup>

### 3. Modern Economic Theories and Practices

Here we wish to have a glimpse of the leading theories behind economic activities and put them in perspective so as to place them with the biblical viewpoint.

#### 3.1 *Adam Smith and the Collapse of the global classical liberal system*

Adam Smith is known as the founder of economics as a science. The laws of economics, he believed, lead to the prosperity of all nations provided that one allows them to work without outside intervention, i.e., intervention by the state. Each strives for riches, and through absolute competition the selfish agents in the market hold one another in check and advance developments in a way which is favourable for all. However, history has shown that the application of this economic faith did not lead to the prosperity of all, and of all nations. Within the nations the masses became impoverished. Internationally, liberalism led to an intensification of colonialism on the one hand and the competition of the great European imperial powers striving for hegemony of one on the other. The result was the great world economic crisis of 1929 with its concomitant mass unemployment, great misery and two world wars.<sup>38</sup>

#### 3.2 *John Maynard Keynes and the Welfare State*

John Maynard Keynes is known as the father of the concept of welfare state. He deliberately parted company with belief in the autonomous self-regulation of the market for the good of all. This goal,

36 HARTLEY, *Leviticus*, 446.

37 HARTLEY, *Leviticus*, 446-447

38 Ulrich DUCHROW, "Christianity in the Context of Globalised Capitalistic Markets," *Concilium* (1997/2) 33-43, here 33.

he argued, can only be attained by conscious political direction. The criteria for such action are justice, equilibrium and peace. Keynes's great theoretical achievement consisted in demonstrating that full employment, regular growth and an increase in purchasing power are possible if the state itself guides investment activity in a cycle which runs opposite to the economic situation. If in addition taxation policy damps speculation and progressive taxation of wealth finances social policies, the result can be what we call a welfare state. The great efficiency of the model is shown by a comparison between the phase influenced by Keynes and the neo-liberal phase: between 1950 and 1978 in the USA the income of the poorest 20% rose by 140%, and that of the richest by 99%; by contrast, between 1978 and 1993 the income of the poorest fell by 19%, while that of the richest increased by 18%.<sup>39</sup>

### 3.3 The Neo-Liberal Phase of Globalisation of Economic Power

This started in 1975 and toppled all the ideas of Keynes. It produced unemployment and burdened the state budgets to find additional costs to finance the unemployed. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have long been getting a grip on the debtor countries of the South. They give absolute priority to payment of interests to creditors. These programmes involve reductions in state expenditure, and that becomes a burden on social education and health programmes. They force wages down and give capital every possibility of increasing profit through deregulation and privatisation. In Europe the same mechanism is enforced through the criteria of convergence towards monetary union. As the state budget can only be in deficit to 60% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it has to save. This saving happens in the spending for the poor. Thus the welfare state is dismantled.<sup>40</sup> Indeed the present-day global economic system functioning in the line of free market has generated misery for three-quarters of humankind. While 20 percent of

39 DUCHROW, "Christianity," 35. See also Marciano VIDAL, "The Free Market Economy and the Crisis of the Welfare State," *Concilium* (1997/2) 101-110. Vidal, 102, points out four basic characteristics that defined the welfare state: (i) *Full employment*: The labour market provided full employment. The number of unemployed was generally less than 3 % of the working population. (ii) *Social security*: This had two characteristics: breadth and universality. It tended to include all citizens (universality) and to extend to ever increasing aspects of social life (breadth): health insurance, accident insurance, unemployment benefit, pensions for all, and so on. (iii) *Free public education*: The educational system stretched from nursery school to university. Education was free up to secondary level and tended to be assisted at higher levels through state or local scholarships to those who had the required levels of attainment but lacked the economic means. (iv) *Social policy understood as redistributory*: The aim was not merely to palliate or redress scandalous inequalities, but also and primarily to favour a redistribution of wealth. Social policies were the instruments of this redistribution.

40 DUCHROW, "Christianity," 37.

the global population owns 83 percent of the disposable riches of the world, the 20 percent who are the poorest have to survive on 1.4 percent of natural resources. And in this first decade of the twenty first century 14 million children are dying each year before the age of five due to malnutrition.<sup>41</sup>

The recent collapse of many international banks, the massive bailouts required by many reputed pillars of finance for survival and the global economic recession have once again exposed the limitations of the neo-liberal capitalist system. They documented the excesses of unregulated capitalism and laid bare the greed and intellectual dishonesty undergirding the system. Surely, a more honest conceptualisation of the conflict of interest and biases among the rich and powerful players who have benefitted from the system is needed; the focus on the wealth created should also highlight the resultant gross inequity.<sup>42</sup>

#### **4. Possible Strategies of Resistance in Keeping with the Biblical Perspectives**

##### **4.1 The Need to Reinstate the Keynesian Economics**

If one wants to have an economy based on social justice and an international equilibrium, the aspects of Keynesian economics have to be assumed once again.<sup>43</sup> In this respect suggestions of Duchrow seem agreeable. He thinks that these would include in the framework of the UNO a World Economic Security Council to which all trade organisations would be accountable. The IMF would become a World Central Bank. Its drawing rights would be developed into an international Special Bank Fund. This would among other things be financed by global taxation on speculative activity, on income and energy expenditure, and on the "peace dividend" (savings from disarmament).<sup>44</sup> The world trade system would be given, as Keynes envisaged, a better mechanism for stabilizing raw material prices, and sociological and ecological support, including an international environmental tax. The flight from taxation would be stemmed by the taxation of tax havens.

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41 Claude GEFFRÉ, "The God of Jesus and the Possibilities of History," *Concilium* (2004/5) 69-76, here 71. See also, Frei BETTO, "Zero Hunger: An Ethical-Political Project," *Concilium* (2005/2) 11-13.

42 K. S. JACOB, "Capitalism: Regulate, Rework, Transform," *The Hindu Daily* (Kochi edition, Jan 22, 2011) 12.

43 William KEEGAN, "Is This the Road to Ruin," *Tablet* (3 July 2010) 6-7, thinks that the economy in England, and for that matter in international level, will teeter on the edge of the abyss, in the face of the global financial crisis, if politicians junk Keynes.

44 This would lead to the realization of Isaiah's vision of beating swords into ploughshares (2.4). See in this respect Kevin RAFFERTY, "Guns into Ploughshares," *Tablet* (21 August 2010) 11.



The non-governmental organisations would have a legitimate place within all global tax institutions as representatives of the citizens of the world who are affected.<sup>45</sup>

#### 4.2 From the "Welfare State" to the "Solidarity State"

In our present context, as some authors have thought, one needs to even move beyond the idea of welfare state to introduce the concept of solidarity into the modern social contract. Modern social contract is based on principles of freedom and equality (the contract of free and equal human beings). But it has to be re-formulated with a third principle of French Revolution, fraternity/solidarity. This principle takes into account the asymmetry of the human condition and responds to it, which means treating those who are unequal (through having less) in an unequal manner (by showing them preference).<sup>46</sup> We have seen above the place of solidarity in the principles underlying the biblical jubilee prescriptions.

M. Vidal rightly thinks that there are two features that define the principle of solidarity and make up two axiological requirements of a society guided by that principle: (i) a radicalisation of "sociability"; (ii) an axiological preference for the weakest. "A radicalisation of the value of sociability" means to make people, through social institutions and structures, come together not only as a group of free and equal subjects for the sake of self-regarding exchange, but also from a certain sympathy and out of real desire to collaborate in order to satisfy the interests of all the components of the group.<sup>47</sup> In the second aspect, starting from the realisation that social relations are "asymmetrical", solidarity shows on which side one has placed oneself in order to make unjust inequalities disappear and the inevitable inequalities be taken into account through a preference that emphasises the axiological value of the weakest.<sup>48</sup> One does not require recalling here that a radicalisation of sociability and an axiological preference for the weakest are foundational for the jubilee prescriptions of the Bible.

45 DUCHROW, "Christianity," 39. , 46 VIDAL, "The Free Market Economy," 107.

47 DUCHROW, "Christianity," 41, suggests in this regard of beginning new things from below, which would include creation of local economic areas with local markets, which are orientated on need, ecologically sustainable and labour intensive.

48 VIDAL, "The Free Market Economy," 108-109. Dietmar MIETH, "The 'Market' and the Inviolability of Human Dignity in the Perspective of Biomedical Technology," *Concilium* (1997/2) 119-124, esp. 120, speaks of a *social* market economy, which according to him combines the dynamic of equal freedom in supply and demand with the social dynamic of protecting the weaker and allowing them to participate. He says that here the social dynamic is predominantly concerned with the protection of goods which are inalienable and at one's disposal, e.g., health, rights of participation, social rights.

## Conclusion

As the Bible is not a textbook on economics it does not provide a direct blueprint for economic activities and processes. Yet the Bible does provide some criteria by which we can judge the integrity of economic priorities and systems so as to establish a fair and just economic order in the world. The concept of Jubilee presented in the Book of Leviticus appear to be a true point of departure in finding the right orientations to deal with today's economic scenario; indeed the idea of jubilee has its reverberations in the ministry of Jesus too ushering in the Kingdom of God. The proposals of the jubilee year do look like aspects of an utopia; but we need to work with utopia,<sup>49</sup> for a different economic system is both necessary and possible.<sup>50</sup> It is necessary because there are victims of the present liberal capitalism, as we have shown above. Indeed it is the existence of victims which constitutes the point of departure for all prophecy and the criterion for the critique of all social norms and systems.<sup>51</sup> It is possible that the principles of equality, solidarity and accepting the dignity of the weakest, envisaged in the jubilee year prescriptions are also seen in the Keynesian principles of economics, which had proved right once, but which of course will require adaptation as well in the present context. Jubilee holds out the ideal of an egalitarian society. The view of land ownership in it is revolutionary, for it does not promote private property that would help the rich to amass large tracts of land, displacing and impoverishing the poor, nor does it promote speculative buying and selling that feeds inflation. Neither does the manifesto promote a social or common ownership of the land. Surely this manifesto will continue to influence an eschatological vision and utopian thinking until the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus is fully established.<sup>52</sup>

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49 "A different world is possible." was the utopian saying that resounded in the meeting of the World Social Forum held in January 2002 in the city of Porto Alegre, in Brazil. See Luiz CARLOS SUSIN, "Introduction: This World can be Different," *Concilium* (2004/5) 7-12.

50 Jung MO SUNG, "Economic Spirituality: Towards A More Just and Sustainable World," *Concilium* (2004/5) 106-114, here 106-107.

51 MO SUNG, "Economic Spirituality," 108

52 HARTLEY, *Leviticus*, 446. See also MILGROM, *Leviticus* 23-27, 2270-2271, who describes jubilee as a rallying cry for today's oppressed.

# **“Terror all around”: Biblical Perspectives on Violence and Terrorism**

**Boris Repschinski**

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The article traces various trajectories on violence in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. Violence is ingrained even in these sacred texts, and the analysis shows that the people of God not only experience violence as victim but also as perpetrator. Even God appears to act violently at times. Finally, recourse to the teaching on the kingdom shows that Jesus tries to subvert violent imagery from within in order to transcend it.

When one has to write a study on a topic that is so difficult to approach as the present one, and when one starts thinking about this around the Christian feast of Christmas, one is struck first and foremost by a great contrast. On the one hand there are the liturgical readings of the prophet Isaiah speaking in most beautiful poetry of a time when swords will be wrought into plowshares instead of nations taking them up against nations (Isa 2:4–5), when wolf and lamb will graze together in peace, when the infant will play with the snake and when no one will hurt or destroy because everyone will know Yahweh (Isa 11:11–19), or when Isaiah announces God not only as the Mighty Counsellor, but also as the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6). These readings speak of a future without violence. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why these readings are sometimes termed “eschatological”, removing a little of their immediate validity for the here and now, making them somewhat otherworldly. The other side of the contrast seems proven by the terrible attack on an Egyptian Coptic church on the eve of their Christmas celebration. Humans, or so it seems, are fascinated by a vision of a world without violence perhaps because they cannot live it. Perhaps nowhere is this experience more tangible than in the history of modern



India, arisen out of the non-violent actions of a Mahatma Gandhi and yet so deeply mired in a violence that blurs the boundaries of ethnicity, religion or wealth.

Of course the roots of violence are manifold.<sup>1</sup> However, again and again religion is named as one of the key factors inspiring violence and terrorism. Most religious groups have sparked violence against other religious groups, often with overt religious reasoning.<sup>2</sup> Yet explicitly religious terrorism is a relatively new phenomenon. In 1968 none of the eleven known terrorist groups had a religious affiliation, while around 1995 of 50 groups perhaps a dozen were known to be religiously motivated.<sup>3</sup> In 2004 there were 77 known terrorist organization, of which 40 had religious affiliations. Of those, 37 had Islamic ties.<sup>4</sup> Yet it should also be pointed out that with many of these groups it is short-sighted to reduce their motivations to religious convictions while ignoring political and social circumstances.<sup>5</sup> And yet some scholars have pointed out that religious practice itself is rooted in, and responds to, violent impulses, giving them expression but also redirecting them against surrogate victims or scapegoats.<sup>6</sup> While this view of religion and its connection to violence may be open to debate, it still is worth noting that both Jewish and Christian scriptures offer a view of religion that is very far from an often argued contrast between an irenic system of faith and a violent society. Quite the opposite: Violence proves itself intrinsic to both Jewish and Christian arguments.

### 1. Trajectories on Violence in Hebrew Scriptures and Second Temple Judaism

One of the most common forms of violence seen in the Hebrew Scriptures as well as in the New Testament is the fact that individuals

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1 See L. Richardson, *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat* (Random House: New York, 2006).

2 Though official and unofficial reasons may diverge. One example is the pogrom against the Jews in Nuremberg in 1349, where the official reason was that Jews had killed the Messiah, while in fact the Jewish ghetto occupied space needed for the expansion of the city. The Church of our Lady was erected in the spot where the synagogue had stood.

3 B. Hoffmann, *Inside Terrorism* (Columbia UP: New York, 1998).

4 *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003* (U.S. Department of State: Washington, 2004).

5 See Richardson, *Terrorists*, 96–105.

6 The most influential recent proponent of this thesis is Ren  Girard; see for example his *Violence and the Sacred* (Johns Hopkins UP: Baltimore, 1977). He is influential in the founding of the “Colloquium of Violence & Religion” and his mimetic theory is the driving force behind the “Dramatic Theology” founded by Raymund Schwager. See e.g. J. Niewiadomski and W. Palaver, *Vom Fluch und Segen der S ndenb cke* (Beitr ge zur mimetischen Theorie; Druck- und Verlagshaus Thaur: Thaur, 1995).

or communities see themselves as victims of it. The prayer of Psalm 31 is not just a prayer of trust in the loving care of God, it is also an expression of surprise and horror at the discovery that one is scorned and victimized by others, culminating in the realization that the enemies are after one's life: "For I hear the whispering of many – terror all around! – as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life" (Ps 31:13).<sup>7</sup> Perhaps it is noteworthy that Psalm 31 is a rather late text, with the formulation "terror all around" quoting Jeremiah.<sup>8</sup> It mirrors of course not just the individual's distress, but with this phrase the history of Israel as one of slavery, exodus, constant fear of its neighbours, of exile and a disappointing return could be summed up. Israel's history is one of a people under threat. Being a victim of very different forms of violence<sup>9</sup> is one of the fundamental principles that shape Israel's formulation of its God-experience as saviour and redeemer. Psalm 31 ties these very neatly together. When all humans plot murder, God is the rock of refuge and a strong fortress (Ps 31:2).

But the violence encountered in the Hebrew Scriptures is not only a threat against Israel. It is inherent in human activity right from the beginning when Cain murders Abel (Gen 4:1–15), and scriptures know of domestic violence, for example, when the sons of Jacob beat their brother Joseph within an inch of his life and then sell him into slavery (Gen 37), or when the Judge Jephthah kills his daughter because of a religious vow. Even sexually motivated violence is reported in the story of a man and his concubine (Judges 19), of David having Uriah murdered (2 Samuel 11) or that of Absalom, Amnon and Tamar (2 Samuel 13). Therefore, right from the beginning of the human story as interpreted in the light of Israel's history with God, violence is experienced not only from the side of the victim. Israel also realizes that she herself, or individuals within her, perpetrates violent acts. Violence becomes an integral part of Israel's story, and it is a story rife with violent behaviour also on the part of God's chosen people.

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7 The citation is taken from the NRSV; this also accounts for the verse number diverging from the Hebrew text.

8 The phrase *magor missabib* occurs otherwise only in Jer 6:25; 20:3.10; 46:5; 49:29. For the intertextual relationships see G. Fischer: *Jeremia* (HThKAT, 2 vols.; Herder: Freiburg, 2005) at the relevant sections.

9 It should be noted here that the Hebrew language has no single word for violence but uses various nouns and verbs to express different forms of violence; see e.g. *TWOT* (electronic edition for Accordance software, 2006).

Other forms of violence occur on a social level between opposing groups like a king against the people, or the privileged against the weak, or the wealthy against the poor (Gen 34; Judg 12; 20–21; 2 Sam 2–3; 18; 1 Kings 5:27–31; 12:12–15; 2 Kings 9–10; 21:16; Jer 5:1–9; 22:13–19; Amos 2:6–8; 5:10–12; Mic 3:1–3; Ps 12; 58; Job 30:1–8). Occasionally the weak party will react violently, as when Moses strikes the Egyptian (Exod 1:11–15). The accounts of Ehud or Esther strike a similar vein.

Violence occasioned by religious motivations finds expression in the Hebrew Scriptures as well (Deuteronomy 7; 13; 1 Kings 18:40; 2 Kings 10:17–20; Esra 10); similarly, violence against nature, and in particular against animals, finds only occasional expression (Gen 9:1–7; Josh 11:6.9; Judg 15:4–5; Lev 1; 3–5; Num 22:22–31; 1 Sam 15:3; 2 Sam 8:4).

As a whole, the people of Israel experiences violence both as a victim and as a perpetrator. The majority of such cases are incidents when Israel suffers from war waged against it rather than herself waging war against other peoples. The time of taking possession of the land is a case of the latter, but throughout the time of taking possession of the land, of the time of judges and kings Israel finds herself threatened by outside enemies as well as threatening them. A particular problem in the latter context is the sacred promises or oaths to annihilate others completely. The technical term for this oath is *herem*. In these passages God is presented as the ultimate Lord of the war who hands over Israel's enemies for total destruction. An example is when Samuel instructs Saul to war against the Amalekites, "Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction (*herem*) all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey" (1 Sam 15:3).<sup>10</sup> The destruction of the enemy has a ritual character and is akin to a sacrifice.<sup>11</sup> If this is so, then the ban to destruction imagines "a God who appreciates human sacrifice."<sup>12</sup>

10 Other places are: Judg 4–16; 1 Sam 4; 13–14; 17; 31; 2 Sam 1; 8; 10; 1 Kings 20; 22; 2 Kings 3–4; 6–7; 18–19; 24–25; Isa 5:26–30; 28; Jeremiah 6:1–15; 38–39; Ezek 24; Amos 1; Nahum 2–3; Obad; Ps 74; 80; 89; 137; Lam 1–2; 3–4; Dan 2; 7. See for example P. D. Stern, *The Biblical Šerem: A Window on Israel's Religious Experience* (BJS 211; Scholars Press: Atlanta, 1991); S. Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence* (Oxford UP: New York, 1993), 28–89.

11 The practice of such a "ban to destruction" is not widely known in the Ancient Near East; however, a Moabite inscription exists witnessing to it (ANET, 320–321).

12 Niditch, *War*, 50. One should also note that nowadays there is a scholarly consensus that human sacrifice was practiced in Israel far more frequently and later than assumed in previous



Deuteronomy does nothing to eradicate the practice of the ban, but it justifies it by giving reasons: "But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete destruction, ... that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God" (Deut 20,15–18). Not to put too fine a point to it, Deuteronomy here seems to recommend ethnic cleansing for reasons of cultic purity.

It is ironic that the ban to destruction finds its theological justification within the grander narrative of the exodus which has served as an important paradigm of liberation in Christian theology.<sup>13</sup> But particularly the biblical story of the conquest shows something that is inherent in most ethical evaluations of war and violence. While the enemy is viewed as unjust and morally heinous, one's own war is just, morally right, and perhaps even pleasing to God. In the case of the Torah and the Deuteronomistic history, the formation of a national identity is added to this package, distinguishing Israel sharply from the surrounding nations.

A last way of experiencing violence found in the Hebrew Scriptures involves violent behavior on God's part against humans. A good example is the following: "They abandoned the LORD, and worshiped Baal and the Astartes. So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers who plundered them, and he sold them into the power of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them to bring misfortune, as the LORD had warned them and sworn to them; and they were in great distress" (Judges 2:13–15).<sup>14</sup> Behind such incidents is the question whether the God of the

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scholarship. Abraham is praised for his willingness to offer up Isaac, Exodus 22:28–29 appears to demand the sacrifice of the firstborn without a possible substitution as in the parallel Exodus 34:19–20. Ahaz (2 Kings 16:3) and Manasseh (2 Kings 21:16) are accused of child sacrifice, but no explanation as to this accusation arising from foreign influence is offered.

13 See M. Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (Basic Books: New York, 1986).

14 Again more passages can be cited: Gen 6–8; 19; 22; Exod 34:7; Deut 28; 2 Sam 12; Isa 1:5–9; 10:6; 47:6; 51:9; Hos 11:1–9; Amos 3:6; 9:1–4; Nah 1; Ps 3:8; 74:13; 76:6; 90:1–12; 94; 104:7; Job 26:12. The wrath of God in the Pauline Literature is much less violently defined, yet probably takes its theological meaning from these passages in the Hebrew Scriptures; see J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Saint Paul the Apostle* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1998), 79–162.

Hebrew Scriptures is a violent God, a problem that led Marcion in the second century CE to try and cleanse Christian Scriptures from the Hebrew Scriptures and remove all parts of the New Testament that alluded to such a violent, or as Marcion would have it, anthropomorphic God.<sup>15</sup> Looking at these texts one should keep in mind that the theological topic of the wrath of God is tied to God's justice and love for his people. Thus the Psalmist has God say: "If they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness" (Ps 89:31–33).

This selective account of the forms of violence in the Hebrew Scriptures laid to some extent the groundwork for the way Second Temple Judaism dealt with the questions of violence, its motivations and legitimations. If Israel had made the experience of legitimate violence in its history, or the legitimate violent reaction to oppression, or even experienced a God who was willing to react violently, then these strata of Jewish theology could be taken up. Consequently, in this period religion played an increasing part in motivating and legitimating violence.<sup>16</sup> Even if one assumes that sources like Josephus or the Maccabean body of literature have a definitive apologetic purpose, it still becomes obvious that major events like the Maccabean revolt or the first Jewish uprising were legitimized by the appeal to religious traditions and their defence. Similar reasons loom behind the protests against Pilate's attempts to fix a Roman Imperial eagle to the Temple wall (cf. Lk 13:1). Violent resistance to oppression had become a viable option, and it was fuelled by a theology of the chosen people. The Jewish feasts of Purim and Hanukkah remembered such successful resistance, and they arose during the period of Second Temple Judaism.

This rise in violent action during Second Temple Judaism took its cue from the Hebrew Scriptures. This is made explicit in 1 Macc 2:26, when Mattathias kills a Jew about to sacrifice as well as the presiding royal officer on a pagan altar before tearing it down. The verse notes

15 On Marcion see: G. May and K. Greschat (eds.), *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung. Vorträge der Internationalen Fachkonferenz zu Marcion, gehalten vom 15. – 18. August 2001 in Mainz* (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 150; de Gruyter: Berlin – New York, 2002). Similar arguments are also made by Immanuel Kant in his contribution to the "Fakultätenstreit" of 1798.

16 See S. Weitzman; "ViolenceÓ, in: J. J. Collins and D. Harlow, *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2010) 1326 –1327.

that Mattathias burned with zeal “just as Phinehas did against Zimri.” This is an allusion to a story in Numbers 25 where Phinehas kills an Israelite and his Moabite wife.<sup>17</sup> What is important about this parallel is the explicit appeal made to Numbers 25 and the consequent formulation of a linear development from the Hebrew Scriptures to the Maccabean revolt.

But this time did not just see a new surge of violence, it also saw new forms of violence emerging. With the forced Hellenization of Judea initiated by the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes after 167 BCE martyrdom suddenly arose. It involved the choice to die rather than give up one’s religion. The sources in 2 and 4 Maccabees trace this phenomenon theologically to the sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac, yet there is no precedent in Hebrew Scriptures. How widespread it was is hard to say, yet the sources indicate that it was not at all rare.<sup>18</sup>

Another phenomenon with much more public fanfare was the emergence of public violence and rioting. Josephus reports that particularly Jewish festivals like Passover, Shavuot or *Sukkot* were likely occasions for rioting since they invited large crowds, especially in Jerusalem’s temple area, while at the same time heightening sacred resonances and a growing eschatological expectation.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps despite, or perhaps because of the possibility of such excitement, Second Temple Judaism developed a growing popularity of such festival culture combined with pilgrimages to Jerusalem, witnessed to also in the infancy narratives of Luke’s gospel. That they became also valves to express a growing dissatisfaction with Roman oppression in the first century seems only normal. Into this context belongs the emergence of the so called Sicarii during the 50s CE. They seem to have embraced a programme of social and economical equality based on Deuteronomy 15 and Leviticus 25; at the same time they were driven by a concept of purity

17 See J. J. Collins, “The Zeal of Phinehas,” *JBL* 122 (2003), 3–21. It is important to point out that the parallels drawn between Phinehas and Mattathias in 1 Maccabees go far beyond the explicit reference in 2:26. Both kill first a compatriot, then a foreigner, both go on to wage war against Gentiles. Both figures go on to become models for the Zealots who waged war against the Romans in the first century CE.

18 There is some discussion as to whether Jewish martyrdom had connections to similar phenomena in Greek and Roman culture; see J. W. van Henten; *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian Antiquity* (Routledge: London, 2002). If Jewish martyrdom is indeed influenced by Graeco-Roman tradition it is highly ironic that Jews would take up such a tradition in defense of their religious conservatism.

19 See S. Weitzman, “From Feasts into Mourning: The Violence of Early Jewish Festivals,” *JR* 79 (1999), 545–565.



of the land and thus by a desire to cleanse the land of foreigners. For this purpose they did not shy from attacks on foreigners in public places, mostly stabbing them with a short knife called "sica" in a hit-and-run-attack, thus provoking chaos and rioting.<sup>20</sup>

What emerges from this short overview can be summarized in two points. First, it has to be noted that violence and warfare, and even attacks that might be termed terrorist in modern eyes, have not only a long history in Hebrew Scriptures and Second Temple Judaism, but they are also intricately linked to Israel's experience of God even to the point where the utter destruction of the enemy receives sacrificial connotations and is, therefore, part of ritual worship. At the same time, the violence and war experienced by Israel as victim is consequently also interpreted in religious terms. The dire warnings on the eve of entering the promised land bear this out: "But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess" (Deut 30:17–19). It points to the fact that violence is interpreted in Jewish tradition not on its own, but always as a symptom or an indicator of Israel's relationship to God. It is possible to argue that this is the underlying perspective with which the Hebrew Scriptures in general view any kind of reality Israel encounters, or that the base reality of Israel is its relationship with God. Nevertheless, it seems worth noting that Israel experiences not only its own successful warfare as a sign of God's presence, but that it also relates being a victim of violence somehow to its own failure in this relationship.<sup>21</sup> In Second Temple Judaism this leads to the popularity of apocalyptic writings; and finally Jewish writings grappling with the destruction of Jerusalem such as 2 Baruch and 4 Esra come up with precisely such reasoning: God allowed the temple to be destroyed because of the people's unfaithfulness to law or purity.

A second point to make is almost trite but must be mentioned nevertheless: What is justified violence and what is unjustly inflicted violence depends on one's perspective. From Israel's perspective violence done to the foreigner is God showing his loving care for his

20 See D. Rhoads, "Zealots," *ABD* (electronic edition for Accordance software).

21 This is not to deny that there are traditions within Hebrew Scriptures which question such a close causal connection between experience of violence and the relationship to God, as perhaps the book of Job does. Nevertheless, the argument made here is a main trajectory in the Hebrew Scriptures.

people. When Moses and the people sing God's praises "because he has triumphed gloriously" by drowning the Egyptians in the Red Sea (Exodus 15:1), the evaluation of the Egyptians might have differed somewhat.<sup>22</sup> Something similarly ironic happens when Zealots or Sicarii deplore the violent oppression of the Romans and yet take up arms to fight it, even to the point of the mass suicide at Masada.<sup>23</sup>

## 2. Trajectories on Violence in the New Testament

The New Testament knows of violence just like the Hebrew Scriptures. And indeed, the early communities seem to have known violence arising out of the very commitment to Jesus they made. Jesus himself seems to have been regarded with suspicion even by his own family who were not above using force in order to restrain him (Mk 3:20–21). Jesus himself is shown to point out to his followers that there will be violence in the family on account of him. The very early source Q<sup>24</sup> reports that Jesus did not come to bring peace on earth but the sword,<sup>25</sup> and Mk 13:12 illustrates this with predictions about a brother giving up his brother to death, and a father his child, or children killing their parents. Following Jesus is an undertaking that involves violence, and "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force (Mt 11:12)." If any evidence of this is needed, a look at the book of Revelation – that great book of longing for peace – shows a community under siege, experiencing Jeremiah's "terror all around." In many of the NT writings one gets the impression that they were written for a people suffering from persecution. Again it is Matthew who brings this experience into poetic form: "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Mt 5:11–12).

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- 22 A more modern example might be Moshe Dayan who was viewed by the British as a terrorist and who went on to become one of the national heroes of the newly founded state of Israel.
- 23 This argument is valid in terms of the literary history of the revolt, even though there is the possibility that the suicide at Masada never took place as argued by S. Cohen, "Masada: Literary Tradition, Archaeological Remains, and the Credibility of Josephus," *JJS* 33 (1982), 385–405. Interestingly, Cohen started a heated discussion in Israel where the Masada suicide is one of the most important legends of nationalist resistance, while at the same time Palestinian suicide attacks are deplored as terrorism.
- 24 I am following here the most modern reconstruction by in the International Q Project: P. Hoffmann and C. Heil (eds.), *Die Spruchquelle Q. Studienausgabe Griechisch und Deutsch* (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft: Darmstadt, 2002).
- 25 Mt 10:34 uses *machaira*, sword, while Lk 12:51 uses *diamerismos*, division. The International Q Project argues for Matthew being closer to Q's original formulation.

But even if the small band of believers in Jesus suffered from persecution, this did not stop internal violence at all. The first issue is one of social inequalities leading to factionalism within communities. Paul already highlights the issue when he speaks about abuses at the Lord's supper (1 Corinthians 11) where some can afford to get drunk while others are so poor that they cannot still their hunger.<sup>26</sup> In the Epistle of James the issues are of wider significance still: Jas 2:1-7 details not only that there are great social distinctions within the community between the rich and the poor, but James also takes the side of the poor with great authority by appealing to God's preference of the poor: "Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him?" (Jas 2:5). James sets himself into a long tradition of prophets like Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah and Isaiah decrying social injustice as a form of violence abhorrent to God. At the same time he accuses the rich of severe oppression and exercising violence against the poor.

If one of the trajectories in the Hebrew Scriptures and in Second Temple Judaism concerned God as an agent of a form of sacred violence, one might expect such themes to appear again in the New Testament. And indeed, one might turn again to the book of Revelation to see such themes emerging again when after the great persecution the tide suddenly turns and the forces of evil and persecution are suddenly beaten in warfare by mythical figures who turn out to be agents of God.<sup>27</sup> Motifs of vengeance for the persecution and destruction of the faithful appear (Rev 19:2). The first mythical figure to appear is the Word of God whose weapon is justice (Rev 19:11-13), the second figure is an angel (Rev 20:1) who can bind Satan only for a thousand years, while the final victory of Satan is achieved by fire falling from heaven (Rev 20:9), throwing Satan and his minions into a fiery sea and preparing the arrival from heaven of the new Jerusalem, a world liberated and just. Perhaps it is worthwhile to remember the message of Revelation: It speaks to a people suffering from outside persecution and from certain tiredness in the faith. The outside persecution is given much room in Revelation, while the final battle comprises merely 2 chapters out of 22. The readers are told in much detail of the evil powers of the persecutors, but they

26 Paul, however, does not exhort to a sharing of resources but suggests that the Lord's supper be a celebration distinct from meals to satisfy one's hunger or thirst (1 Corinthians 11:34), a somewhat dishonest solution to my mind.

27 This takes place in the final visions of the book in Rev 19:11-22:9 and is artfully presented in that the forces of evil are destroyed in reverse order of their appearance.



are also given the hope that God's mighty will prevail. But God's might is finally not shown in his victory over Satan but in the heavenly Jerusalem, a city that does not need the accoutrements of power and war anymore, a city whose walls are open with gates and completely transparent because they are made of jewels. It is a city of richness, of justice, and of equality. It is a vision of the reality of God's kingdom in which violence and power are no longer present.<sup>28</sup>

Thus it is perhaps justified to say that the vision of the divine presence in the NT carries fewer violent connotations than the God of the Hebrew Scriptures or Second Temple Judaism. This may well have one of its reasons in the very different stories described in the Hebrew Scriptures and in the New Testament. The New Testament does not have to deal with stories of conquest and war, of exile and return. Thus a war faring God does not make much sense in the New Testament. However, there might just be another reason for this observation. If Jesus as the Son of God and teacher<sup>29</sup> of God's presence in his kingdom, as the Word made flesh, suffered violence and death, and if the community realized that this death was part of how God offered salvation to humankind, then violence itself does not have a place in theology, even if it is such a pervasive theme both in the tradition such a community comes from as well as in the reality around them. How difficult this balancing act is can be illustrated with Luke's account of how Jesus reaches a Samaritan village refusing hospitality, where James and John are ready to call fire from heaven while Jesus rebukes them for this idea (Lk 9:53).

Another example might illustrate this as well. It is by now a common assumption among the researchers of the historical Jesus that the concept of the kingdom of God was central to Jesus' message.<sup>30</sup> However, it has been pointed out that the image of the kingdom is one beset with violent overtones.<sup>31</sup> The term kingdom or empire, *basileia* in Greek, is also the

28 For a short and still great commentary see E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Proclamation Commentaries; Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1991).

29 Still a recommendable read is S. Byrskog, *Jesus the only teacher. Didactic authority and transmission in ancient Israel, ancient Judaism and the Matthean community* (Cb 24; Almqvist & Wiksell International: Stockholm, 1994).

30 See the long discussion in J. P. Meier, *Jesus: A Marginal Jew: Volume II* (Doubleday: New York, 1994), 237–507. Similar conclusions are reached also by J. D. G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making: Volume 1: Jesus Remembered* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2003).

31 See W. Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Trinity Press International: Philadelphia, 2001), esp. 9–56; P. F. Esler, "Rome in Apocalyptic and Rabbinic Literature," in: J. Riches and D. C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context* (T & T Clark: London, 2005), 9–33.

term used for the Roman empire which ruled with military force, and *theos*, God, was an official title for the Roman emperor already at the time of Jesus.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, when Jesus uses the “kingdom of God” as the central metaphor of his message, he chooses an at least ambiguous image. And in Matthew, at least, as in Revelation, the imposition of this kingdom is imagined in rather violent terms (Mt 13:41–42; 24:27–31). It might even be argued that even though the kingdom of God is one caring in particular for the merciful and weak (Mt 4:23–25) it uses violence to do so.<sup>33</sup> Thus the problem is whether Jesus does indeed offer an alternative to the paradigm of violence, or whether his message preserves it.

### 3. The Kingdom of God and Violence

Perhaps the tension between violent imagery and peaceful vision cannot and should not be resolved.<sup>34</sup> However, I think that Jesus does not just use a common imagery like the kingdom with its imperial overtones, he also transforms it significantly. A literal analysis of *basileia* and its occurrences and uses in biblical and non-biblical sources does not adequately describe what Jesus does with this image. First of all, the kingdom that Jesus describes is a kingdom of God. However, if one looks at the image Jesus has of God, one comes to conclusions that differ significantly from Roman imperial imagery.

The first thing to note is that the God of Jesus is most adequately described as Father. Jesus himself speaks of God as Father<sup>35</sup> and teaches his disciples to do so as well (Mt 6:9; Lk 11:2). In fact, Father is the most common appellation for God in the Gospels. And God as Father is depicted as caring and loving, who takes care of the lilies in the field, who welcomes home the prodigal son, and who will grant every wish

32 Only recently it is understood how much imperial worship was a phenomenon already well in use under Augustus; for a discussion of some of the evidence see J. K. Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult* (WUNT II:237; Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen 2008), 23–84.

33 Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 176: “Yet in presenting the final triumph of God’s reign, the Gospel resorts to the age-old imperial methods of domination and violence. The sentiments are noble but the violent language betrays the dominant paradigm.”

34 This is claimed by Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 176–177. Carter opts for an approach that leaves such imagery behind, instead arguing for a vision of God’s actions for a just world in terms of mercy and love that is not exclusive to Christianity: “Nonimperial terms such as ‘reconciliation’ and ‘transformation’ in the establishment of ‘God’s just world’ seem more consistent with the Gospel’s vision of God’s work in the present.”

35 Mark 14:36 uses the Aramaic *Abba* on the lips of Jesus, and Gal 4:6 and Rom 8:15 show that the Aramaic word was in use among early and Greek speaking Christians as well. This is enough evidence for the assumption that here an original word of Jesus is used.

of those who are gathered together in Jesus' name. The gospel of John takes up the imagery of God as Father more than any other evangelist and develops it with the imagery of the mutual indwelling, where the believer shares intimate communion with God through Jesus: "that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21). Consequently if there is any violence connoted with the imagery of the kingdom, it is offset with the one whose kingdom it is: God the Father.

But one can go a step further. It is very revealing how Jesus and the Gospels actually fill the metaphor of the kingdom with content. When Jesus wants to describe what the kingdom is like he uses parables, mostly drawn from rural everyday occurrences.<sup>36</sup> They tell about a lost sheep, about a widow and an unjust judge, about wheat growing alongside tares, about a sower going out to sow his seed, or about a mustard seed growing into heaven. The list could be continued, yet the point is clear: There is hardly anything less imperial than talking about a kingdom like a lump of leaven mixed into a trough of dough, or a poor woman finding a lost coin in her dark hovel. The metaphor of the kingdom of God, as glorious and extraordinary as it may sound at first hearing, is in fact a symbol used by Jesus to subvert the very concept of a kingdom of might and power. The God of the Hebrew Scriptures who takes Israel for his kingdom and fights her battles is now a father who sees one son running off with his money and has to listen to another son berating him for it. And the kingdom itself is no bigger than a mustard seed.

And another observation seems necessary as well. Was the idea of a kingdom in Hebrew Scriptures and Second Temple Judaism deeply connected to the identity of Israel as a nation, the kingdom of God as preached by Jesus is a kingdom that is not complete until the whole world is part of it. Jesus' message of the kingdom is universal (cf. Mt 22:9; 28:16–20; Lk 14:21–23). But if everyone is invited to this kingdom it will not be established by violence.

The New Testament does not escape violent imagery, and it does not escape its roots in Hebrew Scriptures, mediated through the traditions of Second Temple Judaism. Particularly under the experience of persecution violence is articulated not only as being suffered, but also

36 See G. O'Collins, *Jesus: A Portrait* (Maryknoll: New York, 2008), esp. 81–110.



as a hoped for vengeance. However, the central message of Jesus of a kingdom of God speaks a different language. It takes up an image that might have had threatening connotations in a Roman imperial context, but transforms it into a language about God and his presence among humans that is subversive of any form of violence. And this message is not only borne out by Jesus' readiness to stake his life on it, but also by his vindication.

#### 4. Conclusion

The biblical message concerning violence and terrorism is ambiguous. Both Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament know of violence, and they also know of traditions which imagine God acting violently on behalf of his people. In the present world where violence and terrorism take on new dimensions it is particularly hurtful to realize that religious movements do not only not always help to calm the spiral of violence but are actively participating in promoting it. For Christians it is humbling to look at our sacred scriptures and realize that even they are not exempt from these patterns. And yet, the whole idea of non-violent struggles to better our world, the idea of pacifism and the witness of many Christians around the world engaging in missions of mercy and love also recall the central message of Christianity that Jesus himself preached: A vision of a kingdom of God that is present wherever people listen to Jesus' vision of God the Father who loves the lilies in the field, and who loves every human being so much more. Christians will not escape the allure of violence, both as victims and as perpetrators. Scripture witnesses to this. But the central message of Jesus subverts its.

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# **Fundamentalism and the Biblical Perspective**

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This paper is divided into three parts. The first part studies the concept fundamentalism in the historical context of American Protestant movement. Since the concerns of the movement centred on their understanding of the Bible there is a brief critique of it and a proposal of an alternative understanding. The second part studies fundamentalism as a global phenomenon and the various solutions proposed to address this phenomenon. The third part shows, first, how there are traces of fundamentalism within the Bible itself and explains them in their socio-historical context. Finally, the paper shows how the Bible could make positive contributions to address the phenomenon of fundamentalism using its rich traditions of Prophets and Wisdom which are embodied and crystallized in the person of Jesus.

My task, in this paper, is to address the phenomenon of Fundamentalism, especially Religious Fundamentalism and the Biblical response to that phenomenon. I would like to study the phenomenon of fundamentalism with its complex contours. I would also like to reflect on the phenomenon of the Bible which appears to me as complex as the former. Rather than dividing the paper into two distinct parts I wish to relate the two phenomena all along the paper. However, the two phenomena would be presented distinctly.

Today, fundamentalism is a global phenomenon and the word has become part of the vocabulary of the common parlance, not only in English but also its equivalents in the various vernaculars. It is important to take note of the fact that the word "fundamentalism" has a history of its own. Over a century, the word has acquired different shades of meanings. A word which one might have used with a certain amount of pride in the beginning of the last century has become a word one would throw at one's opponent in contempt. For our purpose, we need to take into account both the stages of this word.

## I

There is a wide consensus among scholars that the word “fundamentalism” was first associated with the Protestant movement in North America in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The following is considered to be the socio-historical context of the movement: In the wake of scientism and rationalism in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries’ materialistic philosophies and social sciences flourished. The resultant “modern” world-view posed formidable challenges to religious beliefs in general and to Christian faith in particular. The predominant spirit of the period was to suspect traditional doctrines and to subject every inheritance from the past to searching criticism. Since Christian faith was based on the Scripture formed in the first century, the obvious question was the relevance of Christian faith in the modern world. There emerged a kind of secular humanism that manifested tremendous eagerness “to discover and act upon universally valid principles governing humanity, nature and society.”<sup>1</sup> Christian faith was relegated to insignificance, at most to the private domain. In the context of this conflict between Christian faith and modernism, liberal theologians attempted “to recast the whole of Christian faith by searching within the early Christian expressions of faith for the trans-historical ‘principles of religion’ that contained ‘the essence of Christianity.’”<sup>2</sup> Moreover, certain trends in Biblical Criticisms influenced scholars to interpret Biblical texts with a secular outlook. But, according to some Christians these liberal strategies of accommodating to the modern world were severely flawed, and they amounted to betrayal and selling-out of Christianity. Disturbed by these trends in Biblical scholarship and liberal theology, and as “a reaction to the reaction of liberal Christianity to modernity”<sup>3</sup> a group of conservative Protestant churchmen “drew up a list of ‘fundamentals’ that they affirmed: **verbal inerrancy of Scripture, the divinity of Christ, his virgin birth, the doctrine of vicarious expiation, and the bodily resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ.**”<sup>4</sup> Protestant

1 S.M. Michael, “Socio-Political Analysis of the Phenomenon of Fundamentalism,” in A. Peter Abir (Ed), *Biblical Apostolate and Religious Fundamentalism*, Chennai, 2004, p.53.

2 Miroslav Volf, “The Challenge of Protestant Fundamentalism,” in Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann, (Ed) *Fundamentalism as an Ecumenical Challenge*, Concilium 1992/3, SCM Press, London, p.99.

3 Ibid. p.99.

4 Thomas Michael, “Christian and Muslim Fundamentalism,” in *Christian Response to the Phenomenon of Violence in South Asia*, published by Assumption Church, GPO Box 8975, EPC 1099, Kathmandu, Nepal (No Year) p.81 – emphasis in the original



fundamentalism, thus, emerged as a movement to emphasize and to defend the fundamentals of Christian faith. Hence the term fundamentalism. Quoting J. Gresham Machen, the representative figure of this movement, Miroslav Volf appreciates the fact that "The 'new reformation' (16) heralded by fundamentalists entailed a moral *renewal of society* through the spiritual renewal of its citizens."<sup>5</sup> However, as a reactionary movement — reaction to the liberal Christianity on the one hand and to modernity on the other hand — it developed attitudes and traits which were objectionable and unreasonable. It is this set of attitudes and character traits which would eventually help to describe the personality profile of any fundamentalist belonging to any fundamentalist group across the globe, in a rather derogatory way. We shall return to this later. For our purpose, now, what we need to take note of is that "at the centre of the argument was the status of the Bible as scripture and the admissibility or otherwise of modernist textual interpretations with the objective of overcoming the apparent conflict between Biblical teaching and scientific knowledge."<sup>6</sup> Who is right: the fundamentalists or the liberals or is there a mediating position between the two? Before we go ahead, we need to address the issues of authority, inerrancy and transparency of the Bible.

Thomas Michael sums up very well the position of the fundamentalists as follows: "Scripture is inerrant because it is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16) who is Truth. Thus, Scripture cannot contradict itself. The inerrancy of Scripture flows from the truthfulness of God; to challenge one is to challenge both. Because Scripture is inerrant, its authority cannot be contested. There is only one correct interpretation of Scripture, that which comes from a literal reading of the text."<sup>7</sup> This brief summary highlights some of the fundamentalist attitudes towards the Bible which have serious implications for other aspects of the fundamentalist movement as a whole. The Catholic Church, also, had to face the onslaught of modernist philosophies and their opinions challenging Christian faith and dogmas.<sup>8</sup> The major part of the attack was related to the status of the Bible and its claims. We saw, above, how some sections of Protestantism reacted to the challenges of

5 Volf, *Op.cit.* p.100, the page in the bracket refers to the page in the original book of Machen.

6 S. M. Michael, *op. cit.* p.54.

7 Thomas Michael, *op. cit.* p. 82.

8 The document published by the Holy Office on 4 July 1907 on the 'Principal Errors of Reformism and Modernism' condemned and proscribed 65 propositions representing modernist views. See Dennis J. Murphy, *The Church and the Bible: Official Documents of the Catholic Church*, Theological Publications of India, Bangalore, 2001, pp.103-11.

modernism. The Catholic Church, also, responded to those challenges, but in a significantly different way. Over a period of nearly one hundred years she has issued a number of encyclicals, documents and Pontifical Biblical Commission reports articulating its position regarding the Bible and its use in the Church, of which the following are the most significant (the last one being the most recent and a thoroughgoing document on the subject: (1) The encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* on the study of Scripture issued by Pope Leo XIII on 18 Nov. 1893;<sup>9</sup> (2) The encyclical letter *Divino Afflante Spiritu* on the Promotion of Biblical Studies issued by Pope Pius XII on 30 Sept. 1943;<sup>10</sup> (3) The Second Vatican Council document on Dogmatic Constitution concerning Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*; 18 Nov. 1965<sup>11</sup> (4) The document on 'The Interpretation of the Bible' published by the Pontifical Biblical Commission on 18 Nov. 1993 the centenary of *Providentissimus Deus*.<sup>12</sup> On the basis of these documents we can enumerate some healthy attitudes and approaches towards the Bible:

1. Contrary to the fundamentalist view we must acknowledge the historical and cultural distance between us and the Bible. Consequently, the Bible is neither self-contained nor self-interpreting. Therefore, we are encouraged to pursue biblical studies with the aim of bridging the spatio-temporal distance and making the Bible more transparent for our times and needs.<sup>13</sup>
2. The fundamentalist literal reading of the Biblical text is 'naïve literalism' and dangerous. The Historical Critical Method is the indispensable method for the scientific study of the meaning of the ancient texts. We must, however, examine both the strengths and limitations of the various aspects of the historical critical approaches to the Bible, and study other approaches that use human sciences and other contextual approaches.<sup>14</sup>
3. Although we can sympathize with the fundamentalist concerns on the issues of "the divine inspiration of the Bible" and "the inerrancy of the Word of God" yet we must qualify these two phrases significantly:
  - (a) We must take into account the historical character of the biblical revelation and admit that the inspired Word of God has been expressed in human language by human authors possessed of limited capacities and resources. We cannot treat the biblical

9 D.J. Murphy, op. cit. pp.53-82.

11 Cf. Ibid. pp. 332-48.

13 Cf. Ibid. pp. 66-67, 257, 340.

10 Cf. Ibid. pp.239-67.

12 Cf. Ibid. pp. 685-784.

14 Cf. Ibid. pp.691-722.

text as if it had been dictated word for word by the Spirit, but must recognize that the Word of God has been formulated in language and expression conditioned by various historical periods and situations.

- (b) We should not place undue stress upon the inerrancy of certain details in the biblical texts especially in what concerns historical events or supposedly scientific truth. We should not consider historical everything that is reported or recounted with verbs in the past tense, but must take into account the possibility of symbolic and figurative meaning.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, I find the concern and caution conveyed by the Biblical Commission (the fourth document above) worth quoting in full:

The fundamentalist approach is dangerous, for it is attractive to people who look to the Bible for ready answers to the problems of life. It can deceive these people, offering them interpretations that are pious but illusory, instead of telling them that the Bible does not necessarily contain an immediate answer to each and every problem. Without saying as much in so many words, fundamentalists actually invite people to a kind of intellectual suicide. It injects into life a false certitude, for it unwittingly confuses the divine substance of the biblical message with what are in fact its human limitations.<sup>16</sup>

The views we have enumerated above not only help us to address the issue of fundamentalism within Christianity, they will also have a bearing on this paper later when we consider the biblical perspectives on fundamentalism as a whole.

## II

Our actual concern is with fundamentalism as a global phenomenon, beyond the boundaries of Protestantism. It is not within the purview of this paper to discuss the phenomenon of fundamentalism within various individual religions. There is a huge amount of literature on this topic. What I am interested in is the general pattern of fundamentalism one could observe within these various religions. Today scholars identify this phenomenon with a set of attitudes; a mind-set manifested both in individual and social behaviour. Dominic George gives the following profile of fundamentalists:

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* p.723.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* p.725.



They tend to view opposing views from a rather narrow moralistic perspective, and so can become very self-righteous and self-confident. They tend to live in a world of absolute certainties, and do not lend themselves to the process of rational debate or fair dialogue. Their emotive capacity and their energy levels, as well as their readiness to make significant sacrifices for their own narrow beliefs will put any average liberal to shame and self-doubt.

The fundamental characteristic of the true 'fundamentalist' is the extreme simplicity of his/her belief system. The simple and naïve belief becomes a closed loop system, with a simple and rigorous logic of its own. It becomes impervious to any new data input which is not in keeping with his/her own rigid system of thought. They tend to live their lives with unexamined premises and unshakable certitudes. The natural behavioural corollary is intolerance of opposing views, and a more or less passionate motivation to confront and annihilate the opposing views and groups.<sup>17</sup>

There are interesting studies that have attempted to analyze these characteristics from the psychological perspective. For example, Jose Thadavanal has some important insights into the fundamentalist experience. Let me summarize some of his insights. According to him "*Frustration at the existing situation and the subsequent reaction formation and the overwhelming desire to regress to the original 'purity' and 'authenticity' of the religion in question*"<sup>18</sup> are some of the psychological factors that play a role in a fundamentalist experience. He also opines that "Fundamentalism can satisfy some of the deep-seated psychological needs and impulses of its adherents. Among these are the need for power and self-enhancement, and the need to maintain self-esteem and pride. The need for affiliation and support, the need to overcome feelings of inadequacy and insecurity are also important."<sup>19</sup> Combining the concept of "central value"<sup>20</sup> and Leon Festinger's concept

17 Dominic George, "Religious Fundamentalism and a Secular Spirituality" in *Indian Missiological Review*, Vol 18, No, 1, March 1996, p. 6. S.M. Michael, quoting James Barr, attributes rigidity, intolerance, arrogance, hostility, divisiveness, prejudice, narrowness, bigotry, obscurantism and sectarianism as characteristics of fundamentalists. See S.M. Michael, op. cit. p. 52. See also Rosario Narchison, "Towards a Definition of Fundamentalism," in *Vidyajyoti: Journal of Theological Reflections*, Vol. 55, 1999, pp.255-64, who describes extensively ten characteristics of fundamentalists.

18 Jose Thadavanal, "Religious Fundamentalism: Psychological Factors," in *Journal of Dharma*, Vol XV, No.2, April-June, 1990, p. 152.

19 Ibid. p. 155.

20 Psychological studies have shown that a person's behavior is to a great extent influenced by the 'central value' he/she holds. Cf. Ibid. p. 156.

of *cognitive dissonance* Thadavanal explains the core of fundamentalist experience as follows:

People whose *central values* imply notions of 'superiority' or 'uniqueness' tend to have unfavourable attitudes towards members of other religions because they have a psychological need to maintain *cognitive consonance*. ... if one holds that one's own religion is the only true religion, then one cannot at the same time hold that other religions are also equally true. If, on the other hand, one holds that other religions are also equally true, then it will be an instance of *cognitive dissonance* which will cause psychological tension in the person. The human being tends to avoid cognitive dissonance and maintain cognitive consonance as the former generates psychological discomfort and the latter psychological harmony and freedom from tension.<sup>21</sup>

Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, also, studies the fundamentalist experience from the perspective of social psychology and comes to the following conclusion (not entirely different from the view of Thadavanal). I summarize his views using his own words: Foundations are significant for human life. We need foundations in order to be able to live creatively. Our physical, intellectual and emotional strength is based on the foundations of love, care and trust. This also holds in a trans-personal sense. Communities, clans and peoples need their history, i.e. their traditions, rites and cults, in order to be able to exist creatively and in a balanced way and to look to the future. Creativity is identity in transition, an ability to appropriate the past and to transform it into something new. Wherever there is a collapse in appropriation and transformation, that is, where there is the 'end of the world' without a new order becoming visible, fundamentalist reactions emerge. In sum, fundamentalism is a pathological reaction to the experience of the 'end of the world'.<sup>22</sup> Thus, fundamentalism is basically a psycho-social phenomenon.

Now, the experience of the "end of one's world" is related to the classic issues of group boundaries and identity.<sup>23</sup> Of course, this experience maybe caused by a number of factors. Human history teaches

21 Ibid. pp. 163-64.

22 Cf. Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, "What is Fundamentalism Today? Perspectives in Social Psychology" in *Concilium*, 1992/3, pp.14-15.

23 Cf. John Coleman, "Global Fundamentalism: Sociological Perspective," in *Concilium*, 1992/3 p.43.

us that one crucial factor that has played a significant role in this experience is what is called “clash of cultures”. Whenever and wherever one nation/culture has dominated another nation/culture in an aggressive and violent way one could observe fundamentalist forces emerging within the victim nation/culture, simply for the sake of “cultural survival”.<sup>24</sup> From this perspective one could see that fundamentalism has a positive intent and that it is an ancient phenomenon.<sup>25</sup> What has been happening throughout human history at the micro level and in a scattered way is now happening at the macro – global – level in a unified way. Thus, it is easy to agree with the sociologist Roland Robertson that the global rise of fundamentalism is linked to the process of globalization itself.<sup>26</sup> What is new in this global phenomenon, however, is the fact that it is no more one specific religion/culture against another specific religion/culture as it used to be, but now all religions/cultures are facing a common monster, but unfortunately each in its own individualistic way and not in a unified way. The common monster is the secular (in the sense of denying the transcendental dimension to human existence) materialistic and consumerist culture which is promoted by Capitalist market forces exploiting the egoistic proclivity in human beings. The challenge before us is not to arrest this process which is growing with a speed of the hurricane, but to humanize and divinize this process.

We must recognize the positive side of this process in “the increasing consolidation of nations and societies into an integrated evolving *world system* of economic, political, technical inter-dependence”<sup>27</sup> We must appreciate the spirit of modernism that continues to move and motivate us: “an historical optimism, an evolutionary vision of history, with a firm conviction of the inevitable victory of the forces of reason, progress and liberty over those of superstition, obscurantism and slavery.” At the same time, we cannot afford to be oblivious to the fact that “(t)he downside of this optimism in social, political and economic life is a Darwinian ‘survival of the fittest’ that divides the world into ‘winners’ and ‘losers’.”<sup>28</sup> We cannot but agree with the fundamentalists that

24 Cf. S.M. Michael, op. cit. p.63.

25 According to Dominic George, religious as well as various kinds of secular fundamentalism existed as back as medieval times, if not even much earlier. Cf. op. cit. p. 7. I shall show this phenomenon within the Bible itself.

26 John Coleman, op.cit. P.42. For similar opinions see S.M. Michael op.cit. pp.55-65, esp. pp.63-65; Aloysius Fonseca, “Combating the Root of Fundamentalism” in *Vidyajyoti: Journal of Theological Reflections* 63,(1999) pp. 588-92.

27 Ibid. p.42.

28 Thomas Michael, op.cit. p.91 (both this and the previous quotations)



modern progress has been achieved at the cost of religious and moral values which have resulted in dehumanization and breakdown of families.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, we could say that the fundamentalists are noble in their intent but diabolic in their execution. In the literal sense of 'diabolic' they divide reality into "we" and "others" – others, of course, understood as inferior and doomed. If the problem is global, the solution can't be sectarian as the fundamentalists tend to think and act. Swami Agnivesh in a brief but powerful article suggests that "Religion to be non-fundamentalist, non-sectarian, non-hierarchical has to remain just religion and not become either Hindu or Muslim."<sup>30</sup> He rightly sees fundamentalism creeping into any religion in the moment it becomes a Hindu religion or Muslim or Christian religion. And a religion which is fundamentalist ironically is a denial of religion because it robs religion of its quintessence of spirituality and reduces it to a bundle of rituals, beliefs and a veritable source of corrupt commerce.<sup>31</sup> He further suggests that we all must become true fundamentalists in the sense of adhering to the fundamentals of creation and human existence rather than to some sectarian fundamentals of religious dogmas.<sup>32</sup> While discussing the issue of globalization John Coleman makes a pertinent point that, corresponding to the material inter-dependence, there is no sufficient formation of global consciousness. Human consciousness is still fragmented. He rightly insists that "Globalization demands a new sense of meaning, including religious meaning. Purely, secular and materialist accounts do not suffice."<sup>33</sup> After critiquing institutionalized and commercialized religion in a similar vein and distinguishing the two concepts "religiosity" and "spirituality", Dominic George proposes what he calls a "secular spirituality" in order to counter the destructive religious fundamentalism. He then goes on to elaborate on this secular spirituality, which can be summed up in the following three aspects: (1) deeper perceptions of the "mystery dimension of reality"; (2) a

29 Cf. Ibid. p.92.

30 Swami Agnivesh, "An Activist's View of Fundamentalism" in John S. Augustine (Ed) *Religious Fundamentalism: An Asian Perspective*, South Asia Theological Research Institute, Bangalore, 1993, p. 26.

31 Cf. Ibid. p. 26. ,

32 Cf. Ibid. p.25.

33 John Coleman, op. cit. p.42; S.M. Michael makes a similar point that science, technology and rationality have failed to give meaning in both the personal and occupational lives of individuals and have failed to provide a guide to man's quest for ultimate concern.Cf. op.cit. pp.54-55. ,

creative response to that reality; and (3) a communion with this “mystery of reality” more profoundly.<sup>34</sup>

And finally, inspired by an insightful article by Colin O’Connell, I wish to carry the analysis of the phenomenon of fundamentalism to one more level deeper. Using the philosophy of Heidegger, O’Connell addresses the fundamental cause of fundamentalism: “Perhaps the most basic characteristic of the fundamentalist viewpoint is that scripture is interpreted ‘as referential truth, a correspondence between the details of the text and some event or reality outside the text’.”<sup>35</sup> According to Heidegger, “... the history of metaphysics is marked throughout by humanity’s attempt to force reality to conform to its cognitive framework. This framework, particularly since Descartes, has tended to place reality over and against the subject, the consequence being the reality is reduced to the subject’s *objectification*. What counts as real, or better perhaps, knowledge is that which falls in the subject-object schema.”<sup>36</sup> If the subject-object schema is the root cause of our problem then, obviously, the solution must be in the form of non-objectifying mode of thinking. This mode of thinking “is willing to relinquish the controlling interests of the subject and think outside the subject-object schema. It renounces, in effect, the self-empowered thinking of the Cartesian ego by opening itself up to the broadest experience of being.”<sup>37</sup> If I have understood O’Connell’s exposé of Heidegger’s philosophy properly, then it seems to be a philosophy that advocates mystical spirituality, which in essence concurs with the secular spirituality as expounded by Dominic George.

### III

Now that we have analyzed the global phenomenon of fundamentalism in all its complexity we could spend some time reflecting on how the Bible addresses this phenomenon. First and foremost, we have to take cognizance of the fact that there are traces of fundamentalism within the Bible itself – in both the Testaments. What a simple and uncritical believer might take as fundamentals of

34 Cf. Dominic George, *op.cit.* pp. 11-15.

35 Colin O’Connell, “A Heideggerian Analysis of Fundamentalism: A Brief Discussion,” in *Journal of Dharma*, Vol XV, No. 2 April-June 1990, p. 116. O’Connell is actually quoting Vincent P. Branick, “The Attractiveness of Fundamentalism Today: What makes it So Attractive?” Maria J. Selvidge (Ed), Elgin, Illinois Brethren Press, 1984, p.21.

36 *Ibid.* p. 119. , 37 *Ibid.* p. 122.

Judaeo-Christian faith could be exposed as fundamentalist attitudes and mind-set.

The Bible itself bears witness to the fact that the Jews and the Christians have not been immune from the kind of psycho-social dynamics that we have seen to be operative in the context of clash of cultures. The Hebrew Bible talks of Israel as the "Chosen People of God" (cf. Deut 4.37; 7.6; 14.2) and as the "Holy People" (cf. Deut 7.6; 4.1, 21; Lev 11.44; 19.2; 20.26). Exod 19.6 defines Israel's identity as follows: "...you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation." (Peter will apply these words to Christians – see 1 Pet 2.9) Both the placement and the wording of the call of Abraham in Gen 12.1-3 are quite suggestive of the superior and exclusive identity of Israel.<sup>38</sup> Deut 9.5 is an interesting passage that tells Israel that the land is given to her not on account of her "righteousness" but because Yahweh dispossessed the previous occupants of the land on account of the latter's "unrighteousness". A number of texts refer to the phenomenon of "Holy War" (cf. Num 21.1-3; Deut 2.30-35; 3.3-7; 7.1-2; Josh 6.17-21; 10.28; 11.10-11). The passages associated with this theme speak about God exhorting, even demanding that Israel brutally slaughter and totally exterminate the previous inhabitants of the land. This inhuman genocide is given statutory authority in the law of war in Deut 20.10-18. Of course, the "holy war" ideology is couched conveniently in the theological virtues of faith, courage and loyalty to Yahweh. This has led some to spiritualize the ideology as summons to fight evil.<sup>39</sup> There have been various attempts to explain away these embarrassing texts. I don't think there is any hermeneutic way out in rescuing these texts of terror. The only reasonable way, according to me, is to situate these passages in their specific historical context and realize their value limited to that context. It has been recognized that the "holy war" ideology fits well within the religio-political milieu of the ancient Near East.

In the ordinary theories of war in the ancient Orient, and consequently also in that of ancient Israel, the god of a nation fought for his or her people in war. If the victory was gained, the object fought over belonged to the god and that god's nation. That took care of the legal question concerning, for example, captured territory.

38 Note especially vv.2-3: ...so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and the one who curses you I will curse and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

39 Clement, R.E., *Deuteronomy*, NIB, Vol. II, Abingdon Press, Nashville, (1998) p.311.



The victors quite simply were in the right by the very fact that the victorious god was on their side.<sup>40</sup>

The Deuteronomistic writer simply makes use of this common understanding in the ancient Orient and strengthens it further to his own advantage by the two concepts of “monotheism” and “election”: Yahweh, the one and only universal Lord, because of his predilection for Israel, took the land from the Canaanites and gave it to Israel. This also enabled the writer to account for the loss of land to the Babylonians not so much as a defeat of Yahweh as Yahweh’s judgment on Israel. The harshness and brutality found in these texts may have functioned as “a kind of moral armament and strengthening of the population of Judah, who had grown timid and aimless after a century of Assyrian domination. ... The conquest stories in DtrL act as counter-propaganda.”<sup>41</sup> This seems to have been the main function of “holy war” ideology in the context of exile, when Israel had neither a political identity nor any army. “The deuteronomic authors sought to rearm faith as a means for combating the sense of helplessness they so readily associated with their readers.”<sup>42</sup>

The national renaissance that began with Hezekiah and ended unfortunately with Josiah was the first broad hermeneutical context from which the first deuteronomic redactor edited Deuteronomy and composed Deuteronomistic history. This may account for the deep nationalistic pride and militant patriotic atmosphere prevailing in Deuteronomy and deuteronomistic literature.<sup>43</sup> This nationalistic and patriotic spirit, however, may have been nothing more than a defense mechanism against the “cultural shock”<sup>44</sup> that the southern kingdom of Judah was facing under the Assyrian overlords. Assyria had made a treaty with king Manasseh of Judah, as a result of which there was widespread syncretism, idolatry, imitation of Assyrian ways: child sacrifice, witchcraft and superstition, persecution of prophets, injustice and ruthless murder of the innocent (cf. 2 Kg 21). Despite the reformative steps initiated by Josiah, Judah came to the brink of disaster – about to lose the land and to be taken into exile.

40 Norbert Lohfink, *Theology of the Pentateuch: Themes of the Priestly Narrative and Deuteronomy*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, (1994), p. 191.

41 Ibid. p.194.

42 Clements, *Deuteronomy*, p. 311.

43 See Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, The Anchor Bible, Double Day, New York, (1991), pp. 50-53; P.R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, (1968), p.68.

44 See Lohfink Norbert, “Culture Shock and Theology. A Discussion of Theology as a Cultural and Sociological Phenomenon Based on the Example of a Deuteronomistic Law,” *BTB* 7 (1, 1977) pp.12-21.

The Babylonian exile, the second hermeneutical context of the second deuteronomic editor,<sup>45</sup> almost parallels the literary context of the book, in which Moses addresses Israel in the plains of Moab in 12<sup>th</sup> cent BCE. Israel, once again, like the audience Moses addressed, was outside their land, in the “wilderness” of exile, with a history of infidelity to Yahweh behind them. However, failing to link their past to the present, they faced a severe faith crisis.

Thus, Deuteronomy coalesces three historical periods of Israel (12<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Cent. B.C.E.) within the homology of “culture shock”.<sup>46</sup> The “culture shock” refers to the social struggle experienced by one culture in the face of a competitive culture, which appears to be powerful and successful.<sup>47</sup> The 12<sup>th</sup> century Israel experienced it vis-à-vis the Canaanite culture; the 7<sup>th</sup> century Judah vis-à-vis the Assyrian culture; and the 6<sup>th</sup> century exiles vis-à-vis the Babylonian culture. The book of Deuteronomy focuses on the religious dimension of this crisis, because, according to its perception, this dimension is both fundamental and all-pervading. This explains why Deuteronomy is overwhelmingly preoccupied with the first two commandments of the Decalogue: fidelity to Yahweh, and prohibition of idolatry. The same factor could explain the fundamentalist texts we mentioned at the beginning of this section.

It does not matter whether the “holy war” really took place or not, what is a matter of concern is the kind of ideology advocated by these texts considered as Sacred Texts today fans the fire of fundamentalism and encourages chauvinistic attitude towards other religions. For example, the holy war ideology can be seen operating in the harsh legislations of Ezra and Nehemiah against mixed marriages.<sup>48</sup> Gerd Lüdemann points to the tragic twist of irony in the history of fundamentalism:

The most pernicious consequence of the utopias of violence in the Old Testament which are bound up with the Holy War is that in the history of Christian influence, from the Crusades to the Holocaust, they were turned against the people in whose tradition they were produced.

45 See R. Klein, *Israel in Exile: A Theological Interpretation*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, (1979), p.24.

46 Although Lohfink uses this term only in relation to the 7<sup>th</sup> Century experience of Israel I see it as a useful term to link the three periods homologously.

47 See Lohfink, “Culture Shock,” p. 13 for a general discussion on culture shock.

48 Gerd Lüdemann, *The Unholy in Holy Scripture: The Dark Side of the Bible*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 1997, p.74.

In terms of its effect, the marriage legislation under Ezra and Nehemiah is sometimes regarded as carefully planned suicide. For anti-Semitism has a grotesque mirror image in the Old Testament itself. The correct insights here is that the measures taken against heathen wives (and the children of mixed marriage) show an analogy to the steps that were later introduced against Jews.<sup>49</sup>

People, who have admired and appreciated the person and message of Jesus, have not failed to sense the seeds of fundamentalism even in the New Testament, even though Christians have considered them fundamentals of Christian faith. Acts 4.12 makes a categorical statement: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved." (For other exclusivist texts see John 1.14; 3.16; 14.6; Phil 2.9-11) People have also observed anti-Judaism in the New Testament which, ironically, was born in the very Jewish soil and centred on a Jewish Jesus.<sup>50</sup>

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 C.E. was an event of paramount significance in the history of the Jewish people. The event was not only a political setback for the Jews; it also marked a cultural and religious crisis of immense magnitude. Deprived of their religious centre the Jews faced the critical question about the future of Judaism. The factions that existed before 70 C.E. continued after and each in its own way tried to make sense of the disaster and to look towards the future. A new religio-cultural synthesis was a must if Judaism was to survive. "This synthesis and the process of its construction and emergence in the post-70 period are referred to as *formative Judaism*."<sup>51</sup> Both the exclusivist texts and the texts of aggressive anti-Judaism have to be placed in the context of contesting for the privileged task of giving birth and shape to the post-70 Judaism during this formative period.

The book of Revelation paints terrifying images of destruction, devastation and judgment, betraying violent emotions. This feature could have had various rhetorical functions. The author, as a Christian, had conveyed the central message of Christianity that salvation and redemption of the world is in the death and resurrection of Jesus and in

49 Ibid. p.74.

50 Ibid. pp.76-127. Lüdemann discusses this issue extensively devoting the whole of the third chapter of his book.

51 Andrew Overman, *Mathew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social world of Matthean Community*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, (1990), p. 35. See also Daniel Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagina, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, (1991), pp.10-14.



the imitation of that death by the Christians. He had emphasized that true liberation from Evil is not in eliminating Evil, but in letting go of one's ego and letting God's rule of love. But, the author, as a Jew, could not avoid the question of justice, of retributive justice. The Christian martyr who has sacrificed his life comes to heaven with the question: Is there justice and when will it be established? (cf. Rev 6.9-10). So, first and foremost, the visions of disaster and devastation are expressions of divine judgment and thus an answer to the question of retributive justice.<sup>52</sup> In the process there is vilification and demonization of the opponent. "Not only are Jews vilified, but other Christian leaders and the Roman Empire are attacked with strong language as well."<sup>53</sup> This aspect of the book has received severe criticism from modern scholars.<sup>54</sup> This is both a delicate and complex issue. In all probability, on account of their exclusive monotheistic views, the Christians excluded themselves from public life, and this might have caused the Gentiles to demonize the Christians as anti-nationals or atheists. So, the vilification in the book is probably a reaction to this. It is a peculiar relational dynamic which traps one into responding in the same pattern as the opponent, and it is an unending vicious circle. No matter who starts first, vilification cannot be justified. According to Adela Collins, demonization of the opponent is a way of defining one's identity over against the opponent.<sup>55</sup> In another article she claims that the first major aspect of the crisis behind the Book of Revelation is a crisis of identity.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the basic conflict underlying the book could be viewed as a "territorial conflict" – a conflict of social boundaries. What is happening at the corporate level is only an extension of what happens at the personal level. Conflict between groups is analogous to an extension of the clash of ego boundaries.

It is nothing alarming to know that both Jews and Christians have had problems adjusting to the culture of their neighbours. It is a universal sociological problem of boundary definition. But, what is interesting

52 See Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, (1985), p. 198, especially footnote 58; Rowland Christopher, "Revelation: Mirror of Our Passion, Goal of Our Longing," *Way* 30 (2, 1990) pp. 130-31; Klassen William, "Vengeance in the Apocalypse of John," *CBQ* 28, (1966) p. 303.

53 Collins Adela Y., "Vilification and Self-Definition in the Book of Revelation," *HTR* 79 (1-3, 1986) p. 380.

54 See Klassen, *CBQ* 28, pp. 301-02; Patricia McDonald, *Horizons* 23, p. 31.

55 Collins Adela Y., "Oppression from Without: The Symbolization of Rome as Evil in Early Christianity," *Concilium* 200, p. 74.

56 Idem, "Coping with Hostility," *BibToday* 19 (6, 1981) p. 369.

to note is that there is no uniform view in the Bible regarding this issue. Even within the New Testament there is a difference of opinion regarding the issues such as comportment towards secular government, eating the food offered to the idols, etc. Lucien Legrand has done an excellent and extensive study on this theme. For our purpose the following brief quotation is significant and sufficient: "To Luke's befriending approach to the Greco-Roman world and to the profound dialogue engaged in the Captivity Letters, the Johannine Apocalypse opposes a radical rejection of what it deems to be a doomed civilization."<sup>57</sup>

After having taken cognizance of aspects of fundamentalism within the Bible itself, we must move on to consider the positive contributions the Bible could make towards challenging fundamentalism and healing its destructive effects. It is widely recognized that both the books of Jonah and Ruth were written in the context of challenging fundamentalist attitudes within Judaism: The former emphasized God's mercy towards Assyria, once an arch enemy of Israel, who in fact responded well to God's call to repentance. The latter, challenging the harsh legislation against mixed marriage, showed, ironically, how the ancestry of David and eventually of the Messiah started with such a mixed marriage.

Rather than dealing with individual texts I would like to present two traditions within the Bible as antidote to fundamentalism – the prophetic tradition and the wisdom tradition. I take my inspiration from an insightful book by Walter Brueggemann on the three partite canon of *Tanakh* as a model of Biblical education. Hopefully, these insights would help to evolve the global consciousness that we have referred to above. Brueggemann presents the Torah, the first part of the Canon, as performing the sociological function of providing an identity and a centre for life around which to organize all experiences. But, he rightly cautions pointing to the fact that if a community educates only in the Torah it may also do a disservice to its members. "It may nourish them to fixity, to stability that becomes rigidity, to a kind of certitude that believes all of the important questions are settled"<sup>58</sup> which are precisely the marks of fundamentalism as we have seen. But, fortunately, the prophetic part of the Canon offers a different mode of knowledge and makes a very different substantive claim.

57 Legrand Lucien, *The Bible on Culture. Belonging or Dissenting?* TPI, Bangalore, 2001, p.162.

58 Walter Brueggemann, *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1988, p.40.

Prophecy surfaces at a time of great public crisis. There is an important dimension of continuity between the Torah and the prophets, but, interestingly, the prophets use the Torah to argue against the Torah and move beyond it. The prophetic education teaches people not to take too seriously official truth about fact, knowledge, value or power and invites to more elemental things like formation of alternative imagination. It calls attention to the fact that the "old truth" is not adequate for the crisis. So, in a true prophetic spirit we must challenge both the manipulators of modernity and the managers of fundamentalism. Studying the psychological, mythological and sociological aspects of prophetic texts Brueggemann makes three important observations which are relevant for our purpose of developing a secular and mystical spirituality as antidote to fundamentalism:

1. Prophets are persons who are moved by spiritual power that lay outside the rationality of their culture. They are seized and gripped by realities that break epistemological conventions. They don't accept the presumptive world of the dominant culture.<sup>59</sup>
2. The myth of divine council takes us in the direction of providence and destiny and in the direction of decisions to which we are object and not subject. The myth is a poetic way of grounding authority so that it lies beyond the reach of those who govern.<sup>60</sup>
3. Prophets are the voices of "peripheral communities" – peripheral in terms of social power and in terms of religious perception. They not only live in but are shaped and instructed by the life of such communities. There is a close affinity between the new Word of God they utter and the agenda of the community of the marginal ones.<sup>61</sup>

The third division of the Old Testament Canon, the Writings, is a miscellaneous collection, of which many books represent Israelite Wisdom. The first thing we need to take note of is the fact that these books hold together in a serious way a responsible and reasonable knowledge of the world and a passionate trust in God. This literature claims no authority beyond the weight and the persuasion of insight into the shape of the world. There is no appeal here to external and extrinsic authority. Because it is experiential it is not dogmatic. Wisdom is found in the very stuff of life, the world, our experience. In fact,

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59 Ibid. p. 47.

60 Ibid. p. 49.

61 Ibid. p. 50.



wisdom is the result of a dialogue between us as learners and the stuff of life. It is this kind of dialogue with reality that Dominic George had hinted at while explaining secular spirituality. We require “both a forceful insistence that the world should yield its secrets and, at the same time, a patient respect for the truth which will not be forced.”<sup>62</sup> Wisdom teaching has a provisional quality which leaves things open for another experience.

The wisdom teachers affirm that the construction and maintenance of human community is a human task and so they offer a celebration of human freedom and human responsibility. The kind of humanism the fundamentalists seem to fight against seems to be the very stuff of biblical wisdom literature. Wisdom literature recognizes the human person as the generator of new knowledge not known before. Interestingly, it is also the duty of wisdom to point to the dangers and limits of such knowledge.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, discernment is an important part of the wisdom quest. Wisdom is discerning the mystery of reality which is not subject to accommodation or bargaining.

Biblical scholars have seen “order” as the basic goal of international wisdom.<sup>64</sup> Thus wisdom theology came to be seen as creation theology. This perception of the world, as presented in Israel’s wisdom literature, is inseparable from her experience of God. Karl Rahner perceived this theology of wisdom beautifully. According to him, the God experienced in the “mysticism of everyday things” is the experience of God’s life at the very heart of the world. He overcame the dualism between God and the world. For him they are never identical, but neither separate, so that God and the world are experienced and known together.<sup>65</sup> In this sense, perhaps, wisdom may not be a set of objective knowledge, but the essence of mystical experience, a kind of non-objectified knowledge that Heidegger proposes. Wisdom literature provides a biblical model for understanding “divine revelation” essentially via human experience and creation.<sup>66</sup> This model of revelation is best suited

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62 Ibid. p.73.

63 Cf. Ibid. p. 82. The stories of Gen 2-3 and Gen 11.1-9 are considered as part of wisdom tradition which shows the dark side of knowledge.

64 Cf. Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing company, Grand Rapids, 1996, p.117. Brueggemann considers Inter-connectedness of life as a whole as a specific aspect of that order is the central substance of wisdom teachers. See his *Creative Word*, p. 84.

65 Cf. Murphy, *Tree of Life*, p. 120, where he is actually quoting W.Dych “The Achievement of Karl Rahner,” *TD*, 31 (1984), p.332

66 Cf. Ibid. p.126. He suggests further that “the openness of Israelite wisdom to the wisdom of Israel’s neighbors, the clearly international character of wisdom movement, the actual

for a dialogue with other religions and cultures in order to find a “common religious meaning” in the context of globalization today. This also represents an authentic fundamentalism that Swami Agnivesh advocates – a fundamentalism that is built on the fundamentals of creation and human existence.

Finally, we come to consider the teaching *of* Jesus, not so much the teaching *about* Jesus. Jesus stands firm both in the prophetic tradition and the wisdom tradition of Israel. He is both a mystic and a prophet, both being two sides of a same coin. Jesus experienced the Absolute, the Ground of Being as benevolent, loving and compassionate. And he envisaged it as the substratum of all human existence. His mission and message was to raise the human consciousness to the presence of the divine in all human beings. It was his way of updating an old biblical insight that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1.27). His claim to be “one with the Father” (cf. John 10.30; 14.10) is nothing more than a mystical statement, a statement that is not exclusive to him. If “being sent” is another way of saying “bringing into existence” then John 3.16 could be applied to all human beings as God’s messengers of love. (Whether or not they are aware of this truth is another matter.) Jesus definitely revealed what God is, but he revealed much more what human beings could be and are capable of. John 14.6 could be a summary of Jesus’ life of love and service as an authentic way of being human. He was a “born-again” and invites all to be “born again” (cf. John 3.3-6) in the sense of awakening to and aligning with the divine within. Enlightened and empowered by the mystical communion with the divine he was free, compassionate and courageous – free from his ego-mind; compassionate towards those who were lost and courageous in challenging those who were presumptuous and deluded. He “saw” life much more than the physical and the biological and that is why he was courageous enough to embrace death rather than compromise with truth. If this kind of life is not relevant in the critical times in which we are living then I wonder which kind of life is.

The kind of message about Jesus that developed eventually may have been an unconscious agenda of a fundamentalist kind, which could be explained in terms of psycho-social dynamics. Agnivesh critiques such a presentation of Christ. According to him ‘Dharma’ or religion in

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borrowing from Egyptian wisdom, the controlling references to creatures and creation” all point in the direction of Israel’s openness to dialogue with other religions.

its pure form, in its liberating form is Universal and Eternal and Jesus through his life and death embodied this universal, eternal and resplendent Dharma. But, when Jesus is turned into a God and the only Saviour and when he becomes a tool in the hands of the Church he is reduced to commerce and fundamentalism.<sup>67</sup>

Without making any claim to exclusiveness and uniqueness Christians could present both the person and message of Jesus along with the prophetic and wisdom traditions of Israel in which he was rooted as effective ways of steering though a globalized world which is beset by two kinds of fundamentalisms – the religious kind on the one hand and the rational kind on the other.

By way of conclusion, I want to sum up what I have presented in this paper: In the first part I studied the concept fundamentalism in the historical context of American Protestant movement. Since the concerns of the movement centred on their understanding of the Bible I made a brief critique of it and proposed an alternative understanding based on the documents of the Catholic Church. In the second part, I studied fundamentalism as a global phenomenon with all its complex contours and the various solutions proposed to address this phenomenon. In the third part, I showed, first, how there are traces of fundamentalism within the Bible itself and I explained them in their socio-historical context. Finally, I moved on to show how the Bible could make positive contributions to address the phenomenon of fundamentalism using its rich traditions of Prophets and Wisdom which are embodied and crystallized in a remarkable way in the person of Jesus.

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67 Cf. Agnivesh, op. cit. p.27.



# Luke 22:39-46 - A Subaltern Paradigm

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In this redaction study of Luke 22:39-46, the author shows with exegetical insight and pastoral sensitivity the enduring relevance of the message of the Lukan Jesus for those who continue to struggle against the dehumanizing forces of systemic oppression and marginalization. The author makes a clear exposition of Luke's distinctive portrayal of Jesus in "*agonia*" as a model for liberation and empowerment. The author holds that the Lukan Jesus on the "Mount of Olives" remains a paradigm in the arenas of our own social and cultural estrangement.

Jesus' *agonia* ("struggle") on the "Mount of Olives" narrated in Luke 22:39-46 stands as an immediate prelude to his passion and death. One can sense a Lucan redaction focussing on the divine necessity of Jesus' suffering and the way that he acts in accord with the will of his Father. Luke reshapes his source (Mark 14:32-42) by adding elements like strengthening angel, the agony and the sweat-like blood. Luke makes a conscious effort to suggest that Jesus is not distraught or losing control over the events. In his hand Jesus emerges as the victor in his *agonia* with the forces of evil. However, the disciples appear as victims in this confrontation with the powers of darkness. The overall structure of the pericope makes it an instruction on the need for prayer in crisis. "Pray that you may not enter into temptation" (22:40, 46): with this command, forming an inclusion, Luke highlights Jesus' words on the necessity of prayer to survive the *agonia* with his own example of fervent prayer. This episode also reveals Jesus' strengthened character and provides an example of how one can face the great trials of life.

## **1. A Close Reading of the Text**

### ***1.1. Entreaty to follow in times of Trial (V. 39)***

While relying on the synoptic parallels (Mark 14:32=Matt. 26:36) Luke intentionally makes changes at the beginning of his narration.

When Matthew notes that “Jesus went with them”, and Mark says that “they went”, Luke alone mentions that the journey was “as his custom”. He then presents the setting in two parts: Jesus goes and the disciples follow. The insertion of “as was his custom” recalls Jesus’ practice to retire each evening to the Mount of Olives during the time of his ministry in Jerusalem (Luke 21:37). It was no longer necessary to keep Judas ignorant of his movements; so he follows his usual practice.<sup>1</sup> Luke makes use of the third person singular verb “he came out” to narrow the focus on Jesus alone, instead of Mark’s third person plural “they went” for Jesus and the disciples in Mark 14:32. He also adds the third person singular “he went” to emphasize Jesus’ deliberate choice in going to “the place” in v.40 which was well known to Judas. Luke drops the Markan mention of “singing”, which is the last part of the Hallel. Luke doesn’t exclude disciples from Jesus’ mission and fate but states that “they followed” him just as they had been called.<sup>2</sup> This detail in the Lucan story implies the eventual identification of the disciples with Jesus in his trial and destiny. While those who were with Jesus at the Last Supper were called *apostoloi* (“apostles” 22:14), Luke, now influenced by Mark 14:32, refers to them as *mathetai*, (“disciples”). However it is noteworthy that Judas was not among those who “followed” Jesus. Luke avoids Mark’s identification of the actual place as “Gethsemane”<sup>3</sup> in favour of the more general reference in Mark 14:26 “Mount of Olives” to show the eschatological significance of the place where Jesus goes out to pray at a time immediately preceding his direct encounter with the “power of darkness” (Luke 22:53).<sup>4</sup> Thus this transitional verse sets the plot for Jesus’ *agonia*, inviting the disciples to follow him in times of trial.

### 1.2. *Entreaty not to Enter into Temptation (V.40)*

Luke makes here two significant alterations from his source. First, Jesus tells the disciples to pray, rather than to wait while he goes to

1 See Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke* (London: T&T Clark International 1896), 508.

2 See Lk 5:11, 27-28; 9:23, 57, 59, 61; 18:22, 28, 43. *Akolouthein* is a relatively common word among the Synoptic writers, used in Matthew 26 times, Mark 20, Luke 17, Acts 3. On nine occasions of its use in Mark (1:18; 2:15; 3:7; 5:24; 6:1; 8:34; 10:32; 11:9; 15:41), Luke does not take over the word. As for the occurrences in the Third Gospel, with the exception of 23:27 where the source is not readily evident, Luke always takes the verb from his sources (from Q-7.9; 9:57, 59, 61; from L-5:11; from Mark- 5:27, 28; 9:23, 49; 18:22, 28, 43; 22:10, 54). There is, then, a good case against its having been introduced by Luke here.

3 This would be consistent with Luke’s general avoidance of exotic Semitic place names that would have had little meaning to his readers.

4 Dean Béchard, *Notes on Luke 22, 39-46* (Rome: PBI, 2009), 5.

pray (Mark 14:32b, 34b=Matt 26:37): Second, Jesus does not single out Peter, James, and John (Mark 14:33=Matt 26:37), but deals with the disciples as a whole. Luke alone mentions Jesus' command to pray that they may not enter into temptation and he repeats this call to pray in v.46. With the present imperative, *proseuchesthe* ("keep praying") he brackets the whole story, suggesting it as a constant attitude and a great need. Jesus not only tells the disciples to pray but he also directs what they are to pray for: "that you may not enter into temptation". "Enter into temptation" resembles the Lucan expression of "entering into" the kingdom of God (11:52; 13:25; 18:17) or into his glory (24:26). While "entering into the kingdom of God" is always a reward from God "entering into temptation" constitutes the antithesis of entering into the kingdom of God. Therefore, "enter into" here means "enter into the object of" or "succumb to" and not simply "fall into" temptation.

The key word for the entire scene is that of *peirasmos* ("temptation") or, more accurately translated as "test", denoting a sense of struggle and trial rather than seduction.<sup>5</sup> The term *peirasmos* carries a wide variety of meanings in the New Testament: "temptation" or "enticement to sin" (Matt 6:13; 26: 41; Mark 14:38; 1Tim 6:9; 2 Pet 2:9), "of testing God" (Heb 3:8) and "way of tempting" (Luke 4:13), "test" or "trial" (1Pet 4:12) and in all these cases the perpetrators of *peirasmos* are either Satan himself, or people or things and not God. In Lukan writings the term *peirasmos* occurs seven times (4:13; 22:28- referring to Jesus; 8:13; 11:4; 22:40, 46 - referring to the disciples). At the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, he was tempted by Devil's enticements concerning his obedience to the Father and his commitment to his messianic mission (4:1-13). Jesus' *peirasmos*, though noted as carried out by the Devil, was determined by God as under God's direction.<sup>6</sup> The thought of *peirasmos* links with 22:28-38, and indicates that temptations are now at hand; the absence of the article forbids a reference to the great, eschatological temptation.<sup>7</sup> The double use of "in", as the prefix in the compound verb and as a preposition, shows that the petition is not so much for help during the time of *peirasmos* but rather to avoid *peirasmos*

5 See Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke* (Wilmington, 1989), 85.

6 See E. Fascher, *Jesus und der Satan*, (Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1949), 31; F.C. Grant, *An Introduction to New Testament Thought*, (New York, Abingdon Press, 1950), 208.

7 Howard I. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Paternoster Press, 1978), 830.

8 The same emphatic use of *eis* is found in the very similar petition that concludes Luke's version of the *Pater noster*. See Béchard, *Notes on Luke 22*, 5.



altogether.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the phrase “not enter into,” conveys the sense of “not succumb to”, the power that is resident in the *peirasmos*.<sup>9</sup> In this context *peirasmos* suggests a satanic opposition as in 22:48.<sup>10</sup> An important struggle is about to take place, and, as suggested by the position of the command at the outset, the disciples are to have a part in it. They must do more than “sitting” (Mark 14:32); they must also be praying.<sup>11</sup> By creating an *inclusio* in 22:40b and 46b Jesus emphasizes the fact that the disciples can overcome the temptation through prayer. While *peirasmos* is not evil in itself, it becomes evil due to the people’s entering into it. The *peirasmos* is something which, once entered into, cannot be successfully resisted and overcome. It is impossible not to be tempted while it is possible not to enter into or succumb to the power which is resident in the *peirasmos* with the help of prayer. Therefore Jesus exhorts: “Pray not to enter into temptation”.

### 1.3. *Entreaty to kneel down in Supplication (v.41)*

Luke omits the Markan depiction of Jesus’ inner feelings of profound distress and sorrow (14:33b-34a). The omission reflects Luke’s interest in the parenetic value of the scene. The term “sorrowful” found in Mark 14:34 may have negative connotations from popular Hellenistic philosophy, which Luke would not have wanted to associate with Jesus.<sup>12</sup> Probably Luke wants to portray the *agonia* of Jesus’ as a model for future Christian sufferers and martyrs.

Luke simply says: Jesus “withdrew” with a neutral passive meaning rather than Mark’s “precede, to go in front of”. Though the phrase, “*a stone’s throw*,” is not clear how it relates to Mark’s generic “a little” it implies that Jesus knelt down for prayer within a calling and hearing distance. Luke’s description of the posture Jesus assumes for prayer is also quite significant. Luke has Jesus simply “sink to his knees” in contrast to “fall on the ground” (Mark 14:35) or “fall on his face” (Matt 26:39). Though Mark’s image of Jesus prostrating himself on the ground has some Old Testament background,<sup>13</sup> his preceding description of

9 *Peirasmos* denotes a sense of struggle and trial rather than seduction. See Béchard, *Notes on Luke* 22, 7.

10 See the earlier references to satanic activity in 4:13 and 8:13 and in the passion narrative- with Judas 22:3 and with Simon Peter 22:31

11 See Joel B. Green, “Jesus on the Mount of Olives (Lk 22:39-46) Tradition and Theology”, in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 (1986), 31.

12 See Jerome H. Neyrey, “The Absence of Jesus’ Emotions – The Lucan Redaction of Lk 22:39-46”, in *Biblica* 61(1980), 154-157.

13 See Gen 18,2; 19,1; Judg 13,20

Jesus' interior anguish (Mark 14:33-34) demonstrates Jesus' profound distress. But Luke softens the image by reporting that Jesus "knelt down in supplication".<sup>14</sup> It is a clear indication that Luke doesn't want to pose Jesus as distraught or lacking in moral control. We see the idiom for 'kneeling' occurs four other times in Lucan writings where he maintains the same interest: Acts 7:60 - Stephen prays for his enemies even in the face of death stoning; Acts 9:40 - Peter prays earnestly before the death bed of his fellow worker without grief; Acts 20:36; 21:5- Paul makes a deliberate choice to leave the 'loved ones' to reach out many others. In all these instances neither Stephen nor Peter nor Paul lacks moral or emotional control. They face the situation boldly. The gesture of kneeling in this scene, therefore, draws our attention to the submissive disposition of Jesus, as well as to the urgency and intensity of the prayer itself.<sup>15</sup> If Luke was simply rewriting Mark or Matthew, why would he change this detail? Luke might have abbreviated the Markan story for clarity and sharpness of focus, to present the necessary fate of Jesus present in the "cup" - metaphor of v. 42.

#### 1.4. *Entreaty to do Father's Will (V.42)*

Jesus' prayer in v.42 is a slightly redacted version of Mark 14:36 and Matt 26:39b. Luke reformulates the Markan introductory phrase, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you" to "Father, if you wish." Luke uses the vocative *pater* ("father"), as in 11:2 with an implied filial sense and omits the Aramaic *abba*. The conditional clause "if you wish" replaces the declarative statement in Mark, "all things are possible to you", placing the whole prayer subject to the Father's decision.<sup>16</sup> The exact referent of the figurative mention of "cup" seems to be uncertain.<sup>17</sup> In the light of the words Jesus speaks over the cup at the Last Supper,

14 Luke alone mentions this. Standing was the more common attitude (18:11; Matt. 6:5; Mark. 11:25; 1 Sam. 1:26); but on occasions of special earnestness or humiliation kneeling was more natural (1 Kings 8:54; Ezra 9:5; Dan. 6:10).

15 In imitation of Jesus, Christians will kneel for prayer in Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5. See Béchard, Notes on Luke 22, 8.

16 The verb *boulomai* is favored by Luke when God is the subject (16 of the 37 NT uses are Lucan). It carries the tone of a pre-ordained divine decision, somewhat more deliberate than *thelo*. See Béchard, Notes on Luke 22, 9.

17 In the  $\ddot{y}\text{pOT}\ddot{y}\text{p}$ , the cup was linked to wrath (Ps. 11:6 [10:6  $\ddot{y}\text{pLXX}\ddot{y}\text{p}$ ]; 75:8-9 [75:7-8  $\ddot{y}\text{pMT}\ddot{y}\text{p}$ ]; Isa. 51:17, 19, 22; Jer. 25:15-16; 49:12; 51:57; Lam. 4:21; Ezek. 23:31-34; Hab. 2:16; Zech. 12:2), while in the  $\ddot{y}\text{pNT}$   $\ddot{y}\text{p}$ , it is usually associated with Jesus' death, suffering (H. I. Marshall, 831;  $\ddot{y}\text{pTDNT}$   $\ddot{y}\text{p}$  6:149-

the “cup” must refer to his imminent suffering and death. Mark and Luke share the same verb “take away”<sup>18</sup> in the request to remove the cup, but they differ in that Luke has the direct speech, while Mark has both indirect and direct discourse. In his prayerful petition that the Father “take away” the cup, Jesus makes known to the Father his desire to avoid the *peirasmós* that would involve his suffering and death.<sup>19</sup> In other words, Jesus is requesting a potential alteration in God’s plan, where the cup of suffering is dispensed with, but only if it is possible and within God’s will. The prayer closes with “not my will, but yours”, making it clear that Jesus’ request is less significant than his desire to do God’s will.<sup>20</sup> By placing references to the priority of the Father’s will in Jesus’ petition, Luke underscores Jesus’ filial submission in accepting God’s plan with complete trust, even while desiring that it would be otherwise. “Let not my will but thine be done”: the durative imperative suggests a course of action and not merely one single act. Let it all come, not as Jesus may will, but as the Father wills.<sup>21</sup> Luke’s use of “nevertheless” avoids the double use of “but” in Mark and heightens the contrast.

### 1.5. *Entreaty to combat against the Powers of Evil (vv.43-44)*

These two verses of Luke, unparalleled in Mark and Mathew, present much text-critical problem.<sup>22</sup> The manuscript evidence is split fairly evenly with perhaps a slight tilt against inclusion. However the style, vocabulary and the coherent flow of the pericope suggest that these verses are originally part of Luke’s composition. For example, an angelic

53). Another possibility is a reference to a cup of suffering, not wrath. In this context, however, wrath and suffering are hard to separate. If suffering is the sense, the idea is equivalent to “tasting death” (Heb. 2:9; John 8:52). See J. P. Raymond E. Brown, *The death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narrative of the Four Gospels* 1 vol (ABRL; New York, 1994), 169.

18 Although all editions have the reading *parenegke*, there is strong evidence for reading the infinitive *parenegkein*. This is undoubtedly the harder reading, giving either omission of the apodosis with aposiopesis (‘If you are willing to remove this cup from me (well and good)’; or with *ei* introducing a direct question (‘Are you willing to remove this cup from me?’) See H. I. Marshal, 830.

19 See Béchard, Notes on Luke 22, 9.

20 Darrel Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53* (BECNT; Grand Rapids 1994), 1759.

21 See R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1074.

22 For a detailed discussion, see T. Boman, “The Lukan Authorship of Luke 22: 43-44”, in *SBL 1992 seminar papers*, E. H. Lovering (ed.), 154-164.; B.D Ehrman and M.A. Plunket, “The Angel and Agony: The Textual problem of Luke 22:43-44” in *CBQ* 45 (1983), 401-406.



aid appears in response to Jesus' prayer: "then an angel appeared to him" as verbatim in 1:11 and nowhere else in the NT<sup>23</sup> and this image is fully consistent with other instances in the Gospel and Acts.<sup>24</sup> Even though no spoken message is attributed to the angel, the act of "strengthening" "from heaven" to accept the "cup" of suffering is not to be taken away. The aorist passive *ophthe*, ("appeared"), frequently describes supernatural phenomena in Luke (12x) while Mark and Mathew has only one occurrence.<sup>25</sup> The phrase "from heaven" recalls Luke 21:11 in referring to the apocalyptic "terrors and great signs". *Enischyo* ("to be strengthened by someone else") is the only transitive use in the NT.<sup>26</sup> Though v. 44 has four NT hapax legomena *agonia* ("struggle"), *ektenesteron* ("fervent"), *hidros* ("sweat") and *thromboi* ("drops") it does not warrant the assertion of non-Lucan authorship because we do see similar high percentage of *hapax legomena* in other undisputed verses.<sup>27</sup> The only occurrence of the cognate verb *agonizomai* ("struggle") in the gospels is found in Luke 13:24 though it occurs often in the NT. Likewise, the cognate adverb *ektenos* ("fervent") is used in Acts 12:5. The construction, "in his anguish" has a very close parallel in Acts 22:17. Similarly, most of the remaining words in v. 44 are clearly Lucan.<sup>28</sup>

The coherence of the text also suggests its Lucan composition. The prayer uttered by Jesus in v. 42 is dramatically answered by the Father in vv.43-44 and further it links to v.45. Luke notes Jesus' inner struggle as he entreats the Father more fervently. The key term is the comparative "more fervently", which Luke uses of fervent prayer in Acts 12:5 (cf. Jon. 3:8; 3 Macc. 5:9). The intensity of the prayer is underlined by the reference to Jesus' *agonia*. *Agonia* can be interpreted in two radically different ways: as an experience of fear or as victorious combat. The lexicons suggest "contest, struggle for victory" as its primary meaning,

23 This theme has roots in the  $\ddot{y}$ OT $\ddot{y}$ b (1 Kings 19:5-8; Ps. 91:11-12; Dan. 3:28; 10:16-19 and Judaism (3 Macc. 6:18)

24 See Luke 1,11-20,26-38; 2,9-15a; 15,10; 24,4-7,23; Acts 1,10-11; 5,19-20; 8,26; 10,3-6; 12,7-10; 27,23-24.

25 See Luke 1:11; 9:31; 24:34; Acts 2:3; 7:2, 26, 30, 35; 9:17; 13:31; 16:9; 26:16

26 In Acts 9:19 it occurs it with an intransitive sense

27 See Luke 6:38 ; 10:31

28 *Proseucheto* ("prayer" appears 19x in Luke and 16x in Acts, compared with 15x in Matt and 10x in Mark); *egeneto* ("to become, be" *passim*); *hosei* ("like" 15 out of 21 NT uses are in Luke-Acts); *katabainontes* (from the verb *katabainein* "to go down, fall down", appears 32x in Luke-Acts, 11x in Matt, and 6x in Mark). See B  chard, Notes on Luke 22, 10.

and “anguish, agony of mind” as a secondary derivative meaning. The meaning of *agonia* which best seems to suit the Lukan context is “contest or struggle” because it is improbable that Luke, who omits “grief” from Jesus, would attribute *agonia* as “fear” to him. On the other hand the context of the pericope suggests a “victorious struggle”. Though we can see a Hellenistic background<sup>29</sup> Luke’s understanding of *agonia* is in the context of *peirasmos*: *agonia* as combat against the powers of evil as it is against “grief”. Jesus’ *agonia* as combat is evident when we compare the Lukan treatment of Jesus’ earlier combat in 4:1-13 which was surely a contest between Satan and Jesus. In short the *agonia* of Jesus in the garden is to be understood as combat against the powers of darkness.<sup>30</sup> Along with the intense prayer came a physical reaction, “sweat”. The reference to “sweat” doesn’t convey anything explicitly about his physical exhaustion but gives a clue to his inner struggle. Luke does not say that Jesus actually perspired blood; rather he uses a vivid simile: his exertion was so great that his sweat became “like” great drops of blood falling down upon the ground (22:44).<sup>31</sup>

### 1.6. *Entreaty to rise up Strengthened (V.45)*

The image of “rising up from prayer” demonstrates the vigour with which Jesus now proceeds to accept the will of the Father. The preposition “from” has been interpreted temporally- meaning “rising from the act of prayer”<sup>32</sup> and causally meaning – “rising up because of

29 Philo understands *agonia* as a combat waged by the rational mind against grief. For a detailed discussion, see Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke: A Redaction Study of Luke’s Soteriology* (New York, 1985), 58.

30 See Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke*, 58-62.

31 Luke has a knack for such colourful metaphors throughout his Gospel. For example, Satan, wanted to “sift [Peter] like wheat” (Luke 22:31). For list of other such comparisons in Luke See J.H. Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke*, 64.

32 See Reiling – Swellengrebel, *A Translators Handbook on the Gospel of Luke*, 702.

33 See F. W. Blass – A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 113. 210. Concerning Lukan use of *apo* as genitive of cause see Lk 19:31; 21:26; 24:41; Acts 11:11; 12:14; 20:9; 22:11. See Plummer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 511.

34 See Bock, *Luke*, 1762; J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke XXIV: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008), 1436; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 781; Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, (WBC; Dallas, 2002) 1084; Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel*, 1077; Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 192.

35 Brown notes that “Having stood up” is a sign of vigour a clear indication that agony and the accompanying sweat were not debilitating but as an athlete now ready to enter the trail” (*The Death of the Messiah*, 193).

prayer”<sup>33</sup> and literally “rising from the position of prayer.”<sup>34</sup> The interpretation, “rising up because of prayer”, emphasises that prayer (vv. 42-44) gives him strength to rise up and underscores the vigor<sup>35</sup> with which Jesus now proceeds. Having prepared himself for the impending *peirasmós* through an intense prayer Jesus rises and returns to the disciples and he finds them “sleeping because of the grief”. While Jesus rises “because of” prayer disciples are sleeping “because of” grief. Only in Luke Jesus finds them sleeping because of grief while in Mathew and Mark Jesus finds them asleep because ‘the flesh was weak’ and “their eyes were heavy.” The verb *anistemi* (“to rise”) can also very well mean the resurrection of Jesus because in Acts Luke consistently uses the same verb to denote the resurrected Jesus (Acts 2:24, 32; 10:41; 13:34; 17:3, 31). Therefore, “rising up from prayer” carries an overtone of Jesus’ resurrection implying the absolute death of Jesus’ self-will and rising into God’s will.<sup>36</sup> Jesus is now free from the *agonia* and ready to do God’s will because of prayer. Thus, “rising up from prayer” calls attention to the way to overcome the temptation is through persistent and intense prayer as exemplified by Jesus.

Luke has not taken over Mark’s three-fold return of Jesus to the sleeping disciples, just as he edited out the three-fold pattern of Jesus’ prayer. Consequently the failure of the disciples, prominent in Mark, fades into the background as Jesus’ submissive prayer to the Father. Their obvious failure to follow Jesus’ instructions “to pray” is given an explanation by the added phrase, “because of grief”. The reason for the sorrow is not clearly indicated in this scene, as Luke has omitted Jesus’ confession of profound distress and sorrow in Mark 14, 33-34. Since the relation between “grief” and “sleep” is variously interpreted in ancient sources,<sup>37</sup> the identification of the disciples’ emotional or moral weakness is difficult here.<sup>38</sup>

### 1.7. *Entreaty to pray “in order that you will not enter into Temptation” (V.46)*

Though the Lucan redaction retains all the essentials of the Markan version, Jesus’ monologue is drastically abbreviated here. While Jesus

36 See Marshal, *The Gospel of Luke*, 833.

37 Many texts say that sorrow/grief deprives one of sleep (e.g., Ps 6, 6; Lam 1.2), while others say that sleep comes with the emotional exhaustion of excessive grief (e.g., Jug. 71.2). For further discussion, see Neyrey, *Passion According to Luke*, 65-67.

38 See Béchard, Notes on Luke 22, 14.

prayed, his disciples slept. Jesus' goal is accomplished: "he rose from prayer" whereas the disciples' trial lies still before them: "rise and pray". They cannot but face it with sorrow, but they must not face it in sleep. And he rouses them with a question: "why are you sleeping?"<sup>39</sup> Though in the New Testament the verb "to sleep" mainly refers to the literal state of sleeping (Matt 8:24; Mark 4:38; John 11:13), it is contrasted with the idea of watching and praying (Matt 25:5; 26:40, 43, 45; Mark 13:36; 14:37, 40, 41; Luke 22:46; 1Thess 5:7). Therefore, sleeping here is seen as a sign of the spiritual weakness of the disciples. Whereas Jesus rises up from an agonistic prayer that has strengthened him for the decisive conflict that lays ahead, the disciples are told to rise up from sleep. Jesus renews his call of v. 40 that his disciples should pray that they might not enter into a sphere of such difficulty that it would prove a threatening trial to them. While the exhortation to pray in v.40b is introduced by an infinitive clause, in 46b it is introduced by a *hina* clause which can indicate both the content<sup>40</sup> ("pray that you may not enter into temptation") and the purpose<sup>41</sup> of the praying ("pray in order that you will not enter into temptation"). Therefore the exhortation to 'pray' is not essentially connected with the sleep of the disciples, but with the perilous situation in which they are about to be caught up.

## 2. The Emerging Picture of Jesus in Luke 22:39-46

As we have seen in the close reading of the text, Jesus demonstrates his fierce devotion to the Father even in the face of his impending passion and death. He casts himself completely upon the will of the Father, and consequently the Father strengthens him through his angel. As he submits to the Father in what his filial dedication demands of him, he expresses his willingness to fulfil the Father's plan of salvation. He becomes all the more aware that he has come not to do his own will, but to live in loving surrender to his heavenly Father. So with a steadfast and a determined mind he faces the impending "test", the power of darkness.

Jesus faced the *agonia* and he came out with victory won because he was strengthened by the Father. The agony is ended. Jesus is no longer agitated by the prospect of taking the step into the depth of the sin and the curse that were awaiting him; he now proceeds to take that

39 J.W. Hol-leran, *The synoptic Gethsemane: A Critical Study* (Analecta Gregoriana; Rome, 1973), 103.

40 See Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 1440; Nolland, *Luke*, 1084.

41 See Bock, *Luke*, 1762; Lensky, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel*, 1078.



step. He takes it with absolute firmness, with a courage that is utterly beyond human strength, with the sureness of victory and triumph. Jesus' *agonia* was understood not as fear or excruciating pain or distress, but as a "victorious struggle" against the powers of darkness.<sup>42</sup> Jesus struggles with the onslaughts of "*peirasmos*" and stands firm and faces the impending hour of death. Jesus in *agonia* sweats profusely. The reference to "sweat" doesn't convey anything explicitly about his physical exhaustion but gives a clue to his inner struggle. But it is a clear description of Jesus' prayer as a moment of fierce struggle with the power of death like the endurance of the athlete in the arena.

The Lucan text says nothing explicit about Jesus' emotional status. Luke makes a conscious effort to avoid suggesting that Jesus is distraught or not exercising control over the events. As Jesus 'rose up from prayer' he emerges as the victor in the struggle with the forces of evil. While Mark and Matthew present Jesus racked with grief and distress before the onslaught of death, Luke has a different tone. In the hands of Luke, the grieving and fearful Markan Jesus is transformed into a figure of equanimity and poise in the face of death, one whose soul not even the most appalling suffering can vex<sup>43</sup>. Luke omits Mark's prayer: "My soul is sorrowful even to death" (Mark 14:34). While Mark describes Jesus' thrice coming to the disciples for support and his reproaching them for not "watching with him", Luke has categorically omitted these and other hints of Jesus' grief in the garden. The petitions that the "hour" and the "cup" be removed from him in Mark (Mk 14:35-36), is omitted in Luke by eliminating the first petition about the "hour" passing. The drift of these redactional changes indicates that Luke omitted Markan details which might suggest Jesus as distraught or lacking in moral control. Positively, there are indications in Luke which suggest that Jesus exemplifies the cardinal virtue of *andreia* ("courage"), which is the antithesis of 'grief'.<sup>44</sup> He is not said to be "grieving unto death" but facing the powers of evil.

Although the request to "remove this cup from me" suggests his traumatic experience in the garden it is clearly subordinated to the basic theme of the prayer: "Father ... not my will but yours be done". When Luke changes Mark's "if you are able" to "if you will", he focuses on the Father's will and Jesus' obedience. And by changing Mark's "not what I will but what you will" to "not my will but thine be done", Luke

42 See Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke*, 58-59.

43 See Ibid., 50-53.

44 See Ibid., 54.

makes the Father's will the centre of Jesus' prayer. Moreover, Jesus, the obedient Son, 'kneels' with self-control and dignity, to pray for the strength and courage to follow his Father's will even into the jaws of death<sup>45</sup>. The kneeling posture of Jesus is consistent with the mood of Jesus as he is not being subject to "grief". And the Lucan detail, "rising from prayer", suggests that Jesus never shrinks or collapses.<sup>46</sup> Jesus accepts the "cup" courageously, without fear.

Jesus emerges as a man of prayer who lives in constant and loving union with God. He kneels down in prayer and is raised up by that prayer. Therefore, he is not subject to irrational passion, but searching for the Father's will and obedient to the Father in prayer. Having prayed to the Father and strengthened by him in prayer he rises from his agony and emerges as a victor. He exemplifies in his own life what he instructs his followers to do. He prays earnestly while the disciples sleep and are unable to pray. Now that he has prayed, he can command and empower his disciples likewise to pray.

The strengthened character of Jesus can be seen by the chiasmic arrangement of the text:

- a Jesus instructs the disciples to pray: (v. 40)
- b Jesus withdraws from the disciples: (v. 41a)
- c Jesus kneels down to pray: (v. 41b)
- d Jesus prays to the Father: (v. 42)
- e an angel appears to strengthen Jesus (v. 43)
- d' Jesus prays more intensely:(v. 44)
- c' Jesus stands up from prayer: (v. 45a)
- b' Jesus returns to the disciples: (v. 45b)
- a' Jesus instructs the disciples to pray: (v. 46)

As it is seen from the chiasmic structure, at the very centre of the scene we have the Father's response to Jesus' prayer. This shows that although the 'cup' is not taken away, the Father effectively strengthens Jesus for the ordeal that awaits him.

To conclude, Lucan Jesus is not contracted by "grief" but he "kneels" upright in prayer and is "raised by that prayer". He doesn't lack strength rather he is 'strengthened' from heaven. He struggles in prayer thrusting

45 Possible influence on this scene by the Suffering Servant motif found in Isaiah is noted by J. Green, "Jesus on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-46): Tradition and Theology," *JSNT* 26 (1986) 29-48 and W.J. Larkin, "The Old Testament Background of Luke xxii, 43-44," *New Testament Studies* 25 (1979) 250-54.

46 See Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke*, 54.

aside the assaults of evil that would sway him from his mission. He practises "courage", as he seeks the will of God. He combats with *peirasmós*. "Jesus, therefore, is not a victim, out of control, subject to irrational passion. On the contrary, he is portrayed as practicing virtue, singlehandedly searching for God's will and being fully obedient to God"<sup>47</sup>.

### 3. "Strengthened Jesus" – A Subaltern Paradigm: A Contextual Appraisal

Does the mute voice of the Dalits echo in the scene of Jesus in the garden? Does the *agonia* of Jesus in the garden inspire the Dalits and the poor in India and enable them to commitment and dedication in the march towards a new humanity? One can see that their agonizing struggle is well reflected in the *agonia* of Jesus. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry he called people to repentance and announced the Good News to the poor. And in the garden he presents himself as a model to combat with the powers of evil. The *agonia* of Jesus helps to understand the redemptive meaning and purpose of the silent suffering of the Dalits. For those who suffer, words have little effectiveness: On the "Mount of Olives" one can see a God whose struggle gives hope and new meaning to those who struggle with their own *peirasmós*.

The Lucan text is framed with Jesus' advice to the disciples: "Pray that you may not enter into test" (22:40b, 46b). While it forms an *inclusio* around the pericope, it indicates that all are targeted for combating with the powers of evil. Luke used *peirasmós* to characterize the assaults of Satan against Jesus at the beginning of his ministry (4:2, 13). At the Passover meal the disciples were warned of this impending combat and told to "arm" themselves for it (22:35-38) and here on the "Mount of Olives" (22:39-46) he himself enters into the final struggle with the powers of evil. The Dalits are challenged to combat with the powers of evil such as social contempt, discrimination, oppression, exploitation and exclusion. The Dalits are straight in the middle of a fierce *agonia* and crisis and they have to "rise" from their slumber to face the *peirasmós* of injustice and dehumanization. Thus, the command to "pray that you may not enter into test" is not a mere exhortation but it is the absolute means for humanizing society.

"To follow" in the Lucan narrative implies the eventual identification of the disciples with Jesus in his *agonia* and destiny. It thus has a

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47 Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke*, 67.

hortatory aspect for the readers of the Lucan Gospel. By “following” Jesus, the Dalits are combating their own economic backwardness, social oppression, political powerlessness and cultural discrimination. As *agonia* was not understood in the ancient world as fear or excruciating pain or distress, the *agonia* of the Dalits is emancipatory rather than depressive. Jesus endured his *agonia*, so that he could reveal what it means to his disciples. It was his radical choice, a fundamental self-surrender to the Father’s will. The *agonia* of the Dalit community is a struggle for empowerment and for a better society. The answer to Jesus’ prayer, fortifying him for his agony, is an assurance to the disciples who follow him in his trials. The Dalits who are sidelined from society find strength from Jesus in the garden in their struggle against social segregation, deprivation of equal status and human dignity.

The *agonia* in the garden became a definitive point for Jesus. He prays: “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will but yours be done”. The Dalits draw inspiration from Jesus to fight against the “cup” of unjust social structures which ostracize them to the peripheries of society. Jesus’ *agonia* in the garden was an occasion to affirm his own divine identity. Struggling with their own *peirasmōs* the Dalits recognize their own wounded psyche to reconstruct their personal identity.

Jesus kneels, with self-control and dignity, to pray for strength and courage to follow Father’s will even into the jaws of death. Consequently, with a steadfast and a determined mind he is ready to face the impending trial, the power of darkness. The Dalits whose suffering and humiliation are taken for granted are “kneeling down” with self-control and dignity to fight against their social, cultural and political estrangement with a hope that they too will “rise up” one day. Luke stresses the idea of prayer during the agony: “prayed fervently” (Luke 22: 41, 44). In the hour of his agony Jesus tells his Father what he feels and desires. Luke sets a high priority upon Jesus’ own example of prayer than upon his instructions regarding it.<sup>48</sup> Jesus is not spared the trial, but what is supplied is the strength to face it. Though he does not hesitate to ask if another way can be found, he affirms his resolve to go the way the Father wants. The Father responds not by granting Jesus his request for another way, but by giving him strength to face

48 Jesus finds strength through prayer at a critical time of testing. This is somewhat apparent in 5: 16; 6: 12; 9: 18; 9: 28, etc. So it is no accident that Jesus goes to the garden with only one weapon: prayer.



what the Father has called him to do. So also his disciples must do the same in order to stay faithful in their own times of trial and testing. It may sound spiritualistic to say that the suffering community must kneel down for prayer to know the redemptive value of its innocent suffering. But without a strengthened "soul" one cannot fight against the unjust structures effectively. The "strengthened" Jesus urges the Dalits to fight against the discrimination in society on the basis of ascribed untouchability, unjust caste system, cultural and political estrangement. As Jesus finds needed strength through prayer at a critical time of testing, so also the Dalits are challenged to do the same in order to stay faithful in their own times of trial and testing. The "strengthened" Jesus was determined to make the supreme commitment to fulfill his mission on earth. As Jesus prays (vv. 41b, 42-44) so are the Dalits to pray (vv. 40, 46) and as Jesus rises up because of prayer (v. 45) so are the Dalits to rise because of prayer (v. 46). Consequently their wounded psyche will find healing and their damaged personal identity will find an assertive identity. The Dalits are challenged to assume the attitude of Jesus today. They too find opposition in society, although the precise shape of the oppression may differ from one to another. They too are urged to overcome their *peirasmōs* by *agonia* and prayer. They too will be strengthened by the fact that the Father will help them as he helped Jesus. Thus the *agonia* of Jesus on the Mount of Olives inspires the Dalits to commit themselves for building up a new humanity and it serves as a paradigm in their *agonia*.

In short, Luke 22:39-46 reveals the *agonia* of Jesus against the powers of evil, and it has a clear message to inspire the life of the Dalit community. The goal is to struggle for building up a human community. *Agonia* remains valid whether it is on the "Mount of Olives" or the arenas of our own social and commercial worlds. The Lucan Jesus on the "Mount of Olives" is a model for humanizing society.

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# **Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Conflicts**

## **Can the Laws for “Non-Israelites” in the Torah be a Model for us today?**

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The multicultural and multi-religious modern societies among other questions and challenges first of all face problems of how to keep one's own identity but at the same time integrate people of other cultures or even how to organize a successful working together in daily life affairs. On the other hand such phenomena are not really new. The Old Testament scriptures tell us about similar problems in ancient Israel. All the more extended law-codes of the Torah also deal with the question for a good integration of strangers, foreigners and aliens. These laws later on led to the so called “Seven Laws of Noah” as a model for successful living together. In some way this model can be helpful for handling this challenge today, but with one important exception: In the 21st century CE a theocratic organization can never again be the background for lawgiving.

Today's world with its globalizing tendencies – and these will go on and grow during the coming decades – brings forth various challenges. The question as to how to deal with the multicultural and multi-religious dimensions within this process is one of the most far-reaching elements within this complex worldwide development. Much of the economic progress within the so called threshold-countries leads to richness among the local upper class and some foreigners in these countries, but at the same time also to a new kind and dimension of poverty alongside them. This in many regions causes – also and first of all religious-fundamentalism among the “losers” of the lower classes. In other parts of the world on the other hand, especially in European and north-American states, more and more societies and their governments face problems of how to keep their own identity, at the same time integrate people of other cultures or even how to organize a successful joint action in daily affairs. Such integration is first of all

important since these countries need those foreign workers for generations to come in order to keep their own high level of lifestyle. But more and more it becomes a question of cultural tensions and religious conflicts within such societies as well. So called subcultures develop their own activities, ghettos come into being and violence caused by the fear of each other increases. Phenomena like these are a worldwide big challenge to our societies, but even more so to the generations of our children and grandchildren.

On the other hand such phenomena and developments are not really new, they only are of a new quality. The Old Testament scriptures for example tell us about similar problems in ancient Israel and Judah. Out of their social, economic and political needs, all the more extended law-codes of the Torah also deal with the question for a good integration of strangers, foreigners and aliens.

In the following I shall first have a look at these "alien-laws" within their biblical context, then I shall describe their *Wirkungsgeschichte* as the so called "Seven Laws of Noah" in later biblical and rabbinical traditions, and further on I will examine their value as models for solving our modern problems.

## 1 The Alien in the law-giving parts of Torah

The Hebrew Bible knows two different terms for the alien, *ger* and *nokri*. An exact distinction in linguistic meaning between the two is not quite clear. Lang sees in the *nokri* the less and in the *ger* the better assimilated – even open for the JHWH-worship – foreigner within the Israelite society,<sup>1</sup> whereas Kellermann points to the fact that there was a development of the term *ger* within the Old Testament scriptures themselves<sup>2</sup>. It seems that both of them are right to a certain extent, since it is striking that out of only six occurrences of the word *nokri* in the context of law codes of the Torah, five are found in the

1 Bernhard Lang, "nkr," in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*. Vol. 5 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1985), 454-462, 457-458: "[Es] scheinen die Fremden in zwei Gruppen zu zerfallen: in *gerim* ..., die sich der JHWH-Religion öffnen, ... und *nokrim*, die dies offenbar nicht tun. ... Diese Dichotomie von halb-assimilierten (*ger*) und nicht-assimilierten Fremden (*nokri*) hat Israel mit vielen Völkern gemeinsam."

2 Dieter Kellermann, "gwr," in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*. Vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973), 979-991, 983 984: "Derger gilt in alter Zeit doch wohl als Staatenloser und wird nicht vollberechtigt zum *qhl* gerechnet. ... Sein Status und seine Privilegien hängen von der Gastfreundschaft ab ... Während in der Frühzeit Israels der *ger* seiner Rechtsposition nach dem Metöken Griechenlands vergleichbar ist, ... entwickelt sich der Begriff immer mehr– unter dem Vorzeichen der religiösen Integration– hin zum Proselyten, d. h. zum Nichtisraeliten, der dem Jahweglauben anhängt."

“Deuteronomistic Law Book” and only one in the “Book of the Covenant”. All the other times *nokri* in the Hebrew Bible is either used in a general meaning (cf. Ruth or the strange woman of Proverbs etc.) or in very late parts of scriptures where *ger* in fact already points to converts or even to refugees from the former northern kingdom of Israel to Judah who somehow could be seen as related to the native people at least in culture and religion. In total the Hebrew Bible contains 92 occurrences of *ger*<sup>3</sup> and 45 of *nokri*<sup>4</sup>, of which 60 *ger* - and the already stated six *nokri* mentions are in the context of Torah law codes. On the status of the alien in these law-codes we shall now focus.

### 1.1 *The Law Codes in the Book of Exodus*

In the Book of Exodus we find three pericopes of relevance, namely “Instructions for the Passover” (Exod 12:1-13:16), the “Decalogue” (Exod 20:1-17) and the “Book of the Covenant” (Exod 20:22-23:33). All the three make special regulations for aliens in Israel; in the Book of the Covenant one of these speaks of the *nokri*.

#### 1.1.1 *The Alien in the “Instructions for the Passover”* (Exod 12:1-13:16)

Three times in chapter 12 the alien is the subject, namely in verses 19, 48 and 49. The Passover-instructions are motivated by the insight that JHWH had brought out Israel from Egypt, where they themselves lived as aliens (Exod 12:17).

Exod 12:19: *For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether an alien or a native of the land.*<sup>5</sup>

This law as such first of all does not automatically imply that all the aliens in Israel took part at the Passover-celebrations, but it rather points to the idea that during the Passover all the households within Israelite territory have to be kept free of leaven, even if aliens live in them. All the people living in Israel during Passover have to abstain from leavened bread. The goal of this direction seems to be the keeping of the whole land pure during the feast. Aliens in this context have to accept a cultic rule of the native population.

3 Abraham Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer Publishing House, 1990), 242-243.

4 Even Shoshan, *Concordance*, 762-763.

5 All the quotations of the Bible in this article follow the “New Revised Standard Version” (NRSV).



Exod 12:47-49: *The whole congregation of Israel shall celebrate it. If an alien who resides with you wants to celebrate the Passover to the LORD, all his males shall be circumcised; then he may draw near to celebrate it; he shall be regarded as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it; there shall be one law for the native and for the alien who resides among you.*

With this the above stated becomes certified. Aliens may live in Israel who want to assimilate totally, even in religious worship.<sup>6</sup> For them all ways are open. If they confirm their will for full integration through circumcision of all male family-members, they are not only allowed to celebrate Passover with the native people, but they – and this is clearly said – are to be seen as equal with them in any case. There is no difference in law, in rights etc. between them and native Israelites. Besides them other aliens, who are not willing for conversion, are also not allowed to take part at the Passover-celebration, but are nevertheless to keep the rule of unleavened bread as verse 19 shows. Full integration into a society which is organized as a theocracy (in all these law codes the JHWH Torah is constitutive for the whole individual and communal life) at least – this is shown clearly with the command above – is only possible through conversion. But if somebody is ready for conversion he or she is absolutely equal to the natives.

### 1.1.2 *The Alien in the Decalogue (Exod 20:1-17 // Deut 5:6-21)*

Within the Decalogue the alien is mentioned in verse 10 in the context of the Sabbath commandment. Since this law code finds a direct parallel in Deut 5:6-21, where the alien in connection with the Sabbath commandment is mentioned as well in verse 14, this parallel shall be faced here too.

Exod 20:8-11: *Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work - you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.*

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6 That may partly be immigrants from the former northern Israel in Judah (cf. Lang, *nkr*, 985-986), but at the same time other foreigners as well who intend to live in and with Israel for ever. The text is clearly open for assimilates and converts in general.

The Sabbath law is here explained: Every seventh day is to be kept as a “holy day” of rest, because God also took rest after six days of creating activity. This rest is universal, since God is the creator of the whole universe. It even includes the cattle, and it is noteworthy that the resident alien is mentioned after that. Israel in other words has to guarantee that the universality of Sabbath rest is kept as a general rule for the whole creation. Therefore it is logical that this command builds a right also for the foreigners in Israel.

*Deut 5:12-15: Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work - you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.*

Even if at a first glance the Deuteronomistic law for Sabbath rest seems to be the same as that of Exodus, there is a remarkable shift in the motivation for the commandment. Whereas the creation deed of JHWH was the reason given for Sabbath observation in the Exodus version, the Deuteronomy points to the exodus-event as the crucial point of the Sabbath law. The “holy rest” on every Sabbath works as a remembrance of JHWH’s liberation deed for Israel from their hard toil as loan workers in Egypt. Therefore the Deuteronomistic version closes the resident aliens and the slaves together as the two groups which are mostly unfree and dependent. Israel has to grant them the Sabbath as a rest day as well, because they themselves should never forget their own history as foreigners in Egypt. As God liberated them from oppression, they on their part have to bestow the Sabbath rest as a God-given human right to those dependent on them. Aliens here are shown as not having the same rights as natives in principle, as dependent on humanity given to them and as an underprivileged group similar to slaves. The command to include them in the Sabbath law is rooted in Israel’s awareness of its own origin.

Besides all the (important!) differences between the two Decalogue-versions one far-reaching principle is constitutive for both of them: Human rights like for example a free day a week have to be rendered

possible for everybody. This is on the one hand appropriate because in facing God as the Creator all humans are equal and since everybody is stranger in most parts of the world it is reasonable on the other hand.

### 1.1.3 The Alien in the "Book of the Covenant" (Exod 20:22-23:33)

The Book of the Covenant is one of the most influential texts of law-giving within the Exodus tradition. Nevertheless only three articles mention the "alien", one of them calling him *nokri*. It is the first one in order, but the stranger is not the subject of the law:

Exod 21:7-9: *When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. If she does not please her master, who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed; he shall have no right to sell her to foreign people, since he has dealt unfairly with her. If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her as with a daughter.*

The context here is slavery. The foreigner in contrast to all the other texts mentioned here really is a person living outside Israel. Accordingly aliens in this text are not seen as bad in general, but the intention is rather to protect right and defenceless Israelite girls. *Nokri* is used here in a general meaning. Of more interest are the two passages of the Book of the Covenant which deal with the *ger* as the subject of the law.

Exod 22:20-23: *You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry; my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children orphans.* –

The alien here again is paired with two other dependent and right-less groups of the Israelite society, namely the widow and the orphan. This triad of social underprivileged and right-less classes of the society – widow, orphan and alien – is very revealing. Even if the motivation for protecting the alien – the own past as dependent loan workers in Egypt – is the same as in Deut 5:14, this command points to a much earlier background of ancient Israel. Whereas the Decalogue faces the only partly autonomous theocratic society of Second-Temple-Judah, this law is of clearly pre-exilic character of which the verbs "oppress" and "abuse" in relation to parts of the own people give evidence. Van Houten is right when he states: "Because the alien was probably a foreigner, i.e. someone outside one's clan, tribe or village, it is appropriate to use a term which refers to the oppression of one people

by another people. ... All three groups mentioned are socially and economically dependent. Because they have lost or have been separated from their *paterfamilias* they are particularly vulnerable to abuse. The law prohibits this abuse. ... The alien, widow and fatherless are clearly dependent on charity, but the law does not go so far as to require charity.”<sup>7</sup> The last of Van Houten’s remark is direct to the point: As the covenantal law of Exod 22 prohibits the oppression and ill-treatment of the alien, thus stands the Decalogue for an active support for him. That marks a development within biblical thought from monarchic era through exilic times to Second-Temple-Period. From this point of view the pericope of Exod 23:9-12 is of special interest:

Exod 23:9-12: *You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the wild animals may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard. Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have relief, and your home-born slave and the resident alien may be refreshed.*

This text combines the abuse-law of Exod 22 with the Sabbath law of the Decalogue, but it is much more progressive than both of them. The oppression of aliens now is directly linked to one’s own exodus-experience and the pure human character thereof resulting direction is more stressed than anywhere else: “On the basis of the context of this law, it is likely that the oppression referred to is oppression in the courts. Stated positively, it is claiming that the alien has legal rights and must be accorded a fair hearing. This law also will have far-reaching implications. It provides for the alien reckoned as an equal in some respects with an Israelite.”<sup>8</sup> In such a horizon indeed the Sabbath law is presented here anew: “The rationale here is not tied to the creation order ... or to the deliverance from Egypt. ... The concern shown in the motivating clause seems to be purely humanitarian.”<sup>9</sup>

Within the law-codes of the Book of Exodus we can see a far-reaching shift. It is a shift from acceptance and tolerance of the foreigners to the possibility of full integration and to a theologically motivated

7 Christina Van Houten, *The Alien in Israelite Law* (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1991), 53-54.

8 Van Houten, *Alien*, 55. ,

9 Van Houten, *Alien*, 56.



humanitarianism. Ancient Israel had to experience changes and developments during the times. But one important data seems to have been present at all times: We ourselves have been strangers and slaves in Egypt. Our God delivered us from this; so we now have to offer humanity and justice to the aliens residing among us. What that meant in detail was dependent on time and situation, but that it should be in force was never questioned.

## 1.2 *The Law Codes in the Book of Leviticus*

The Book of Leviticus first of all consists of priestly laws for the temple-cult. The most prominent law-code is the so called "Holiness Code" (Lev 17:1-26:46) which contains 20 references to the alien, whereas only one is found in the "Priestly Legislation Code", namely in the rules for "Yom Kippur", and exactly in Lev 16:29. This may be the starting point regarding Leviticus.

### 1.2.1 *The Alien and Yom Kippur*

At the very end of the commands for Yom Kippur in Lev 16 the alien residing among the Israelites comes into view. The context and the focus too are similar to the already mentioned Sabbath commandments:

Lev 16:29-31: *This shall be a statute to you forever: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall deny yourselves, and shall do no work, neither the citizen nor the alien who resides among you. For on this day atonement shall be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the LORD. It is a Sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall deny yourselves; it is a statute forever.*

As for the weekly Sabbath so also for the "great Sabbath"<sup>10</sup> it is constitutive that it must be a day of rest for everybody. Again the reason is less humanitarian than theological: The yearly cleansing includes the whole creation, it means the renewal of the relationship between the whole creation and its Creator.

### 1.2.2 *The Alien in the "Holiness Code" (Lev 17:1-26:46)*

The Holiness Code with 20 references to the alien is one of the most important documents of ancient Israel's consorting with strangers

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10 Yom Kippur as the most important Jewish feast day is often called the "Sabbath Sabbathon", the Sabbath of Sabbaths. This points to the great importance of Sabbath itself as *the* God given feast day.

and foreigners. We can make out four larger discourses besides a handful of single references.

*Lev 17:8-16: And say to them further: Anyone of the house of Israel or of the aliens who reside among them who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to sacrifice it to the LORD, shall be cut off from the people. If anyone of the house of Israel or of the aliens who reside among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut that person off from the people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar; for, as life, it is the blood that makes atonement. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel: No person among you shall eat blood, nor shall any alien who resides among you eat blood. And anyone of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside among them, who hunts down an animal or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. For the life of every creature - its blood is its life; therefore I have said to the people of Israel: You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off. All persons, citizens or aliens, who eat what dies of itself or what has been torn by wild animals, shall wash their clothes, and bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the evening; then they shall be clean. But if they do not wash themselves or bathe their body, they shall bear their guilt.*

In this discourse again the alien is not the subject of the commands; rather are non-natives who reside among Israel juxtaposed to the natives concerning some ritual laws. Again the reason is that some parts of the divine law of Torah are to be fulfilled by the whole Israel, which means by all the people living there irrespective of their origin or cultural tradition. In the Holiness Code the motivation for such kind of commandments is not to be found in the fact that aliens are former Israelites in Judah, but much more is it right that even the natives "are motivated to obey the laws in Leviticus not because they understand the reason for the law, nor out of gratitude, but because the law derives from the Lord, their God. This phrase is an appeal to authority."<sup>11</sup> In conclusion must this part of the Holiness Code be a document of the time of temple-theocracy in Jerusalem as well. The next discourse points to the same:

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<sup>11</sup> Van Houten, *Alien*, 124.

Lev 24:16.21-22: *One who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall be put to death; the whole congregation shall stone the blasphemer. Aliens as well as citizens, when they blaspheme the Name, shall be put to death. – One who kills an animal shall make restitution for it; but one who kills a human being shall be put to death. You shall have one law for the alien and for the citizen: for I am the LORD your God.*

Again, the laws have to be kept by everybody, because they are given by the Lord himself.

In all the other laws of the Holiness Code mentioning aliens they are the subject of the command and the goal is fairness, charity and human equality for and of them. The clearest words on this are found in Lev 19:33-34: *When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as a citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.* – This command to act to an alien as to a brother is again motivated by remembrance of their own past. But the law here goes much further than in the Covenant Code when it demands that the Israelites *love* the alien. “The great command to love the neighbour is extended here to include aliens.”<sup>12</sup> Most of the remaining alien-laws within the Holiness Code are to be seen as resulting from this. Lev 19:10; 23:22 gives the poor and the aliens the right for after-harvest, 25:35 calls for charity to the natives as well as the resident aliens in need and 25:47 demands the right for redemption also for the resident alien.

In sum the Holiness Code shows two trends in the alien-laws. On the one hand there is a tradition to demand from the aliens the keeping of all the God-given laws, even those of pure cultic character, on the other hand it also offers far-reaching rights of equality for them. The former tradition is more motivated by a strict theocratic Judean ideology, the latter by humanity as a just and God pleasing attitude.

### ***1.3. The Alien in the laws of Deuteronomy***

The main law code in the Book of Deuteronomy is the so called “Deuteronomistic Law Book” (Deut 12:1-26:15), wherein several laws for the alien are found, but where also most of the distinctions between *ger* and *nokri* are made. We will deal with these texts below and we shall furthermore give an overview over all the other Deuteronomistic texts about the alien.

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<sup>12</sup> Van Houten, *Alien*, 142.

### 1.3.1 The Alien in the "Deuteronomistic Law Code" (12:1-26:15)

The Deuteronomy in general and the Deuteronomistic Law Code in particular contain the most human and socially motivated laws for the alien. Regarding this it is noteworthy that these texts originate in the time around exile, which means at a time when Judah faced most refugees, loan workers and poor foreigners as well as residents. The distinction between *ger* and *nokri* in Deuteronomy in fact seems to point to the degree of assimilation, which can be shown very well with the first pericope.

Deut 14:21: *You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to aliens [ger] residing in your towns for them to eat, or you may sell it to a foreigner [nokri]. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God.*

With this law we have a striking contrast to laws of the Book of the Covenant and the Holiness Code as well. As the focus in these law collections the equality even in cultic matters, so here much more distinction and tolerance is given. Whereas for Israel it is obvious that they have to abstain from carcass, the resident aliens as well as the temporary foreigners in the land are not obliged to keep this law. At the same time a remarkable difference is made: carcass can be given to the resident aliens, but it has to be sold to the temporary foreigners in the land. The former demand is of double humanitarian kind, since it firstly shows tolerance to people of non Israelite origin and secondly calls for charity in the command not to charge for a food which could not be consumed by oneself anyway. At the same time the only temporary foreigner would have to pay for this meat.

In Deut 15:3 and 23:21 prohibitions against the collecting of taxes from debtors in the Sabbath year are given, except if they would be temporary foreigners; Deut 17:15 excludes foreigners from the Israelite throne of kingship. – The remaining alien-laws are positive commands for the resident aliens in Israel. Deut 16:11-14 includes the resident aliens as well as the other right-less groups (widows, orphans and poor) into the joy and exuberance of the Feast of the Weeks and the Feast of the Booths. "When celebrating the abundant gifts received from the Lord, it is appropriate to respond with rejoicing and generosity expressed by including all the members of society."<sup>13</sup> In contrast to the abundance of aliens on cultic laws out of theocratic reasons in other codes, here

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<sup>13</sup> Van Houten, *Alien*, 90-91.



the openness of the joyful feasts for them is shown as an act of humanity and solidarity. Deut 24:14-21 recalls the general rights of aliens, widows and orphans, the triad of the needy. The motivation for it is pure justice, solidarity and charity. Deut 26:11-13 finally again deals with the obligation to spend the tithe and the third tithe to the Levites, aliens, poor, widows and orphans.

So we may conclude that the Deuteronomistic Law Code is the most social, solid and charitable of all the main law-codes of the Torah. The reference to the most important other alien-laws of the Book of Deuteronomy may show that this is the case for the Deuteronomistic law in general.

### 1.3.2. Other "Alien-Laws" in Deuteronomy

The most important laws regarding aliens in the other parts of the Book of Deuteronomy point to a similar direction. Deut 1:16 – the first mentioning of the "alien" within the first speech of Moses at the Horeb – (*I charged your judges at that time: "Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien."*) and Deut 31:12 – the last reference to the alien in Moses' farewell speech – (*Assemble the people – men, women, and children, as well as the aliens residing in your towns – so that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God and to observe diligently all the words of this law*) somehow build a frame. Both commands underline the Deuteronomistic attitude towards aliens: They are equal to natives before judgement and they have the right to hear the testament of Moses, which he left behind for all the people residing in and among Israel.

Deut 10:18f. again calls for "loving" the alien for the reason that Israel itself has been as a foreign people in Egypt, Deut 27:19 lays a condemnation upon all who neglect the right of the social triad of alien, orphans and widows and Deut 29:10 clearly states that foreign loan workers are to be seen as an integral part of society.

## 1.4. Concluding Remarks

Within the law codes of Torah three tendencies concerning alien-laws can be distinguished. The first group consists of social and cultic commandments which are attached to the land; they are to be kept by everybody living there, be it temporarily or forever. The reason for strict observance of them is that they are given by God. A second group contains rights for aliens living among the Israelites; within these the

degree of equality with the Israelite residents varies quite a lot. The third group consists of commandments for the achievement of the following aims: to protect aliens, to grant them justice and to perform deeds of charity to them.

It seems to me that these three groups of commandments do not primarily point to different ages of Israelite history, but much more to various groups of law-givers, theologians and teachers standing behind them. But on the other hand all the law codes also show that real equality of foreigners with the local population was realized very seldom. In my opinion two principles of value for our problems today can be formulated thus:

- (1) The more open minded a society as such and in total is, the more positive integration is possible (e.g. the alien-laws of Deuteronomy); the more ideologically orientated a society is, the less integration is possible (e.g. the theocratic Judah seen especially in the Holiness Code).
- (2) Aliens are never one uniform group within a society. At least one has to differentiate between resident aliens and foreigners. Among the resident aliens – and that is the group which is to be integrated into society somehow – also the different reasons for their emigration is to be taken into consideration.

The Jewish tradition defined the so called “Seven Noachite Laws” for those gentiles who were not any longer seen as evil-doers and idolators. This tradition started in late biblical time and went on through the rabbinic schools.<sup>14</sup> An examination of them may shed some light on this “Jewish vision” of living together.

## 2. The Seven Laws of Noah

According to rabbinic tradition seven laws are considered the minimum moral duty for all men and women of good will. “Jews are obliged to observe the whole Torah, while every non-Jew is a ‘son of the covenant of Noah’.”<sup>15</sup> The name refers to a tradition after which these laws were given in the context of Gen 9:1-17 with the rainbow as the sign.<sup>16</sup>

14 See in detail Michael J. Broyde, “The obligation of Jews to seek observance of Noahide laws by Gentiles,” in *Tikkun Olam* (1998), 103-143.

15 Stephen S. Schwarzschild, “Noachide Laws,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica* 12 (1971), 1189-1191, 1189.

16 Cf. Johann Maier, “Noachidische Gebote,” in *Judentum von A bis Z: Glauben, Geschichte, Kultur*, ed. J. Maier (Freiburg: Herder, 2001), 307.



The seven laws as traditionally enumerated are:<sup>17</sup>

- (1) Prohibition of idolatry: This prohibition “provides that, to ensure social stability and personal salvation, the non-Jew does not have to ‘know God’ but must abjure false gods”<sup>18</sup>.
- (2) Prohibition of blasphemy: With this first of all a monotheistic worship and behaviour is required.
- (3) Prohibition of bloodshed: Here human blood is in view; in contrast to the first two prohibitions, according to this not only Jews but also Noachites are required “to choose martyrdom rather than shed human blood”<sup>19</sup>.
- (4) Prohibition of sexual sins;
- (5) Prohibition of theft: This law also includes acts like military conquest or dishonesty in economic life.<sup>20</sup>
- (6) Prohibition of eating from a living animal: This at least is the law against consuming of (animal) blood.<sup>21</sup>
- (7) Injunction to establish a legal system: This is the only positive formulated law and is mostly understood as commanding the enforcement of the others.

In this law code we clearly can distinguish between two kinds of commands. First, we have at least cultic commands concerning the religious belief and cultic practice; secondly some better understandable social laws. What these “Laws of Noah” show is the fact that multicultural, multi-religious and at least even multi-ethnic societies need some rules acceptable to all for everyday life on the one hand and freedom, respect and liberty for various kinds of membership of these societies and cultural expressions on the other hand.

### 3. Prospects

The alien-laws of the Torah and their reception in the “Seven laws of Noah” can be models for us today to a certain degree. They show on the one hand the necessity of some rules to be kept by the aliens, but on the other hand they also give clear evidence of the natural limits of a society in openness and tolerance. Whereas – for example – the more socially orientated commands of the “Laws of Noah” seem to be quite understandable, those laws concerning theological areas are, under a

17 See Schwarzschild, *Noachide Laws*, 1189.

18 Schwarzschild, *Noachide Laws*, 1189

19 Schwarzschild, *Noachide Laws*, 1189.

20 Cf. Schwarzschild, *Noachide Laws*, 1189.

21 See Maier, *Noachidische Gesetze*, 307.

modern perspective, of even questionable character. Bloodshed, sexual sins and theft are deeds which every community can (and should!) condemn! On the other hand terms like idolatry are more than interpretable even today. In other words: The quality of these law-codes for us is highly dependent on the ability to interpret these texts in a relevant way.

It is clear that ideological slogans and elements are not suitable for an integration programme in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But the clear ability to formulate one's own values and beliefs is of great importance. Especially the alien-laws found in Deuteronomy and the more social orientated laws in the Noachite laws could be very helpful and far-reaching for our modern situation. Everybody must have knowledge of one's own roots and traditions. Only this can make one free to accept differing ways as well. But if one is rooted in such a way, he or she must be free and open to other ways of thinking and living as well. On the other hand every alien everywhere has to accept the most important rules of his or her host-society. Knowledge of language, official behaviour and philosophical background are very important. The most important rules still seem to be: Love the alien as yourself, let the alien be part of your society and help the alien if he or she needs your charity. On the other hand, for alien willing to live in a foreign region the adequate rules must be: Love the hosts as yourself, try to take part in your host society and keep humanity as your most important ideology.

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